

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

Panel Presentations

Baylor Symposium on Faith and Culture 2022

Art Seeking Wisdom: Union University Undergraduate Panel

Chair: Justin Barnard, Union University

Undergraduates from Union University present papers relating to the conference theme.

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

Exploring Virtue Through Literature

Chair: Trisha Posey, John Brown University

Students from John Brown University spent a semester studying the theme of “Art Seeking Understanding” by exploring the relationship between engagement with literature and virtue development. The following students will present their work:

Anna Marie Ward: “It’s Not Wit, It’s Truth: How Wit Gives an Inspiring Depiction of Companionship”

This paper argues that “Wit”, by Margaret Edson, gives us a clearer and more applicable understanding of what companionship is. “Wit” proves that true companionship is a paradox of suffering and blessing that is necessary for the human experience. Companionship is hard work and painful, but in the end well worth the deep relational growth it cultivates.

Rachel Norwood: “A Hospital Lacking -ity: How Wit Reveals a Lack of Hospitality in Hospitals”

This essay discusses how Margaret Edson’s play Wit reveals a need for hospitality in hospitals through the way doctors and nurses treat Vivian. By using Christine Pohl’s definition of hospitality as seeing someone’s inherent value and recognizing the contributions they can make, a lack of hospitality is evident not only in Jason’s actions but in Susie’s as well. This examination reveals that Wit should not just be used to increase empathy in doctors but should be used to open the eyes of healthcare workers to the realities of their profession: how easy it is to objectify people and neglect to show them hospitality.

Morgen Cloud, “Understanding Sanctification through the Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins”

Gerard Manley Hopkins’s poetry displays a close relationship between the Creator and the created, marked by the sanctifying grace of the Lord. The relationship between God and person is by no means depicted as easy, rather it is shown as a holy process of letting a sovereign God purify human nature. This paper argues that Gerard Manley Hopkins’s poems “The Windhover” and “The Handsome Heart” deepen our understanding of the human relationship to God through sanctification.

Jessica Barber, “The Virtue of Remembrance: Reflections on ‘Eating Alone’ and ‘Eating Together’ by Li-Young Lee”

This presentation responds to Li-Young Lee’s poems “Eating Alone” and “Eating Together” to reflect on the unfailing companionship of the Father and the virtue of remembrance in both the solitary and communal settings. These poems indicate that the virtue of remembrance gives Christians freedom to honor people, places, and things that are mere memories while also reminding them who God is, which brings intimacy.

Colette Campbell, “The Gilded Six-Bits and the Vice of Curiosity”

In Zora Neal Hurston’s ‘The Gilded Six-Bits’, curiosity is the catalyst that enables Missy May’s fall into lustful behavior. This essay argues that this fall is not the only issue caused by misguided curiosity. The vices of lust, greed, envy, and pride all stem from the root vice of curiositas, and the choices of the main characters can ultimately be traced back to this overwhelming need to know.

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

Form as Formation: Poetry, Fiction, Film and Visual Art

Caleb Spencer, Azusa Pacific University

Abram Van Engen, Washington University, St. Louis

Sophia Spencer, Wheaton College

When Michael Fried ended his famous critique of nascent postmodernism in art with a comparison between his preferred art (“presentness”) and the time bound “objects” that had begun to dominate the art world in the late 1960’s it was no surprise that he dug into the register of religion to delineate the difference. Fried implied that the state of presentness produced by true art was a grace, a gift of the highest order. As such his claim is one line with a long history of understanding the value of art in religious or quasi-religious terms including the assessment of Matthew Arnold in *Culture & Anarchy*, Roger Scruton in *On Beauty*, and Elaine Scarry in *On Beauty and Being Just*. Fried suggests that there is profound power to engaging art, a formation that is critical to the postmodern world.

And yet even a quick look through the present culture suggests skepticism of the idea: for example, the brilliant poet and novelist Ben Lerner’s first novel *Leaving Atocha Station* begins with a memorable scene in which the protagonist watches a man weeping before various paintings in the Prado in Madrid. The narrator is captivated by the man’s “profound experience” before the art works and tells us the most profound experience he has had before art is the experience of not having a profound experience before art. The rest of the novel goes on to develop a sincere experience of art for the narrator and ultimately shows a more conventional tale of the transformative power of art, but not before it satirizes and skewers the very presentness that Fried thought was so central to art experiences.

My paper and the rest of our group will engage questions about the relationship between literary art and visual art, with a special emphasis on works of literary art like ekphrastic poetry, adapted novels, that engage directly with visual art. I will seek to answer the question of why literary art seems to need the benefit of “visuals” and yet another of our panelists, a practicing artist, will argue that literary art and philosophy of language is at the core of much visual art practice. Our panel argues that there is a unique knowledge formation that occurs in the making and engaging of visual art but that there is also a unique knowledge formation that happens in the making and consuming of literary art. We are keen to argue for an increased presence of both in the life of the church and the world as a means of increasing the moral and spiritual formation of Christians and non-Christians alike.

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

Painting the Protestant Empire: Sacred and Civil Art in 19th Century America

Paul Gutacker, Director, Brazos Fellows

Elizabeth Kiszonas, Instructor, University of Arkansas

Samuel Young, Baylor University

Andrew Whitworth, Baylor University

This panel explores the theology and aesthetics of Protestant art in nineteenth-century America. Together, the papers explore several questions: in art, how did civil religion intersect with traditional Christian themes and motifs? In what ways did popular and fine art contribute to the construction and critique of religious nationalism? How were national and religious identities served through sacred art?

First, in her paper, “‘There is no perfectibility in this world’: Thomas Cole’s Christian Pessimism in ‘The Course of Empire,’” Dr. Elizabeth Kiszonas examines the painter Thomas Cole’s 1836 series, *The Course of Empire*, in the context of a contemporaneous debate over the meaning and inevitability of America’s “course of empire.” She argues that Cole’s engagement with this theme was a conscious attempt to subvert philosopher George Berkeley’s prophetic words from a 1726 poem, “Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way.” In reframing Berkeley’s line as a threat rather than a promise, Cole’s work reveals not only the persistent ideological weight of Berkeley’s words, but the emergence of a tenacious strand of Christian pessimism that posed a challenge to prevailing notions of national progress in the Jacksonian era.

In their papers, Dr. Samuel L. Young and Dr. Paul Gutacker explore how saints from the Christian past were depicted in nineteenth-century art. In “‘One of the Giants of the World’ Depictions of Martin Luther in Antebellum America,” Young examines depictions of Martin Luther by American artists before the Civil War, discussing especially the ways in which their representations sought to associate the Protestant reformer with the civic virtues of the United States. Gutacker’s paper, “A True Protestant Artist: Ary Scheffer’s St. Monica and Protestant Aesthetics,” looks at the most famous nineteenth-century painting of Augustine and his mother. The portrayal of Monica was among the most famous pieces by the French Romanticist Ary Scheffer, an artist celebrated by George Eliot, Ruskin, and Queen Victoria. For some mid-century Protestant critics, both in Britain and the United States, Scheffer’s Monica was not merely a profoundly moving or morally beneficial work, but also a /riposte/ to Catholic aesthetics. The simple composition, the familial intimacy, and the “calm” yet deeply felt piety of the painting all instructed viewers in the norms of Protestant spirituality.

Finally, Andrew Whitworth’s paper, “One Nation, Under God: the eschatological imagination of Apotheosis of Washington,” uses the 1865 painting /Apotheosis of Washington/, the painting on the underside of the Capital rotunda, to explore one way that the American story/project/community is a theological one and that its relationship to Christian theology is ambiguous. Whitworth argues that as a mythological figure who mediates between the immaterial and material realities of the nation, the deified Washington is intended to secure the eschatological character of the nation as an imagined community.

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

Recovering Education for Beauty: Lessons from our Rhetorical and Theological Heritage

Lee Cerling, University of Southern California

Rebecca King Cerling, University of Southern California

Rev. Dorian Llywelyn, SJ, University of Southern California

Adam Ellwanger, University of Houston-Downtown

There is only the fight to recover what has been lost

And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions

That seem unpropitious.

—T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, “East Coker,” V.186-188

For the past two thousand years, the relationship between rhetoric and Christian theology has been ambivalent—sometimes close, sometimes distant, sometimes adversarial. But when the foundations of the modern University were being laid during the Middle Ages, rhetoric and theology had a friendly and mutually supportive working relationship, and both were oriented toward an appreciation of Beauty as a gateway to apprehending the Divine. For many centuries, this friendly relationship lasted, and a deep concern for Beauty was a core element of the University curriculum.

At least since the beginning of the 20th century, however, the partnership between rhetoric and theology, as well as the orientation toward Beauty, has tended to erode and dissolve. In this panel, we want to explore some of the important lessons to be learned from that past. After briefly grounding the discussion of Beauty in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theological aesthetics, the panelists will each present a vignette from their respective areas of expertise that will shed light on this history, and encourage a re-consideration of the benefits that might be derived from restoring the relationship between rhetoric and theology in Christian educational settings.

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

So Far So Good: Engaging Diversity One Story at a Time

Kerri Fisher, Baylor University

Kayla Mize, Baylor University

Jon Singletary, Baylor University

Carrie Arroyo, Baylor University

Kasey Ashenfelter, Baylor University

So Far So Good is a podcast created by the Garland School of Social Work to practice inclusive, interpersonal dialogue and critical self-reflection. Guests join each week to discuss a piece of art (book, film, podcast, album, visual art piece, etc.) that has helped them to better understand some facet of humanity. Each conversation explores universal, intersectional, and individual insights based on the premise that all individuals are in some respects, like all other individuals, like some other individuals, and like no other individuals. Episodes in season one explore everything from whole-life bodily autonomy, to the impacts of birthplaces on our lives, to the privilege of navel-gazing.

This panel will engage in an abbreviated version of a typical episode of the podcast, followed by a brief Q & A addressing how their selected piece of art has specifically shifted, expanded, or solidified some element of their faith.

Participants will leave the panel with the following:

- An opportunity to practice engaging the Imago Dei in individuals on the panel and in the art being discussed.
- A dynamic and inclusive process (and language) for demonstrating interpersonal curiosity and critically discussing art with others.
- Art recommendations (books, film, podcast, music, visual) for expanding and deepening their understanding of humanity and divinity.

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

The Ecclesial Home for Artists: Why Artists Need the Church and the Church Needs Artists

Gary Ball, Rector, Redeemer Anglican Church
Alex Sosler, Montreat College

Typically, theology and the arts conversations focus on how the church needs artists, and given the evangelical diminishment of the arts, often this is a correct critique. However, we also want to propose in this panel that artists need the church. Artists have typically been cast as the isolated and tortured genius. Individualism seems the default setting of artists and their work. But what can artists expect from the church? And what should the church expect from artists? It's our contention that the church's liturgy can help artists form a sacramental vision, and artists can play a special role in recovering sacramental sight to the world. The church is one of the last institutions where one can slow down and contemplate, and thus retain a contemplative vision of the world. The liturgy reorders our desires from the disorder of the world and restores a reverence for God and the world in an irreverent artistic culture. This rootedness in community is an essential ingredient for healthy artistic being and practice.

This panel features Gary Ball, a rector and practicing visual artists who holds a STM from Nashodah House where he worked under Hans Boersma researching The Oxford Movement and Christina Rossetti. Alex Sosler is a scholar and priest who both pastors artists and researches in theology and the arts. (There may also be one other guest we would include on this panel).

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

The Hospitality of Wonder: Art and Contemplation Revisited

Taylor Worley, Wheaton College
Kutter Callaway, Fuller Seminary
Joy Moore, Union University

Christian tradition represents one particularly strong expression, among multiple religious traditions, of valuing the practice of contemplation. Building on ancient philosophical foundations, Christian tradition can often appear consonant with the Greek understanding of /theoria/ (“gazing at” or “beholding”) but with a more direct theological referent: Gregory the Great describes contemplation as knowledge of God impregnated with love, Augustine defines it as “enjoyment of truth,” and Origen identified contemplation symbolically with Mary’s attention to Jesus as opposed to Martha’s busyness. As an enduring feature of Christian spiritual traditions, contemplation, then, presents an intriguing lens through which to view the experiential renewal the arts provide.

Perhaps, it is enough to state that the generative connection arises from the fact that art and contemplation, when true to their nature, are unable to refuse the hospitality of wonder. At their best, each is a realm of wonder — a world unto itself of imaginative, affective, and, dare we say, spiritual experience. To delineate the connection more carefully, art and contemplation possess at least three shared concerns in their pursuit of wonder: an anti-idolatrous relationship to human knowing, anticipations of a transformative effect, and an orientation to discovery.

Such generalities, however, must be affirmed with particular and resonant examples. This panel conversation will offer fresh engagements on the union of art and contemplation so conceived. While these efforts will be exploratory in nature, the brief presentations will focus on close readings of historic art forms and/or contemporary media for the sake of elucidating their timely connections to spiritual contemplation, like unto the illuminating voices from a previous generation like Simone Weil, Josef Pieper, or Thomas Merton. This survey of various artistic genres aims to identify potential places of shared experience and expertise, and by extension, further demonstrate the power of the arts to still give aid to the human spirit. The purpose of this panel conversation, then, is to celebrate such manifestations of grace that still operate in our world and display the value of our disciplinary efforts to know and steward these art forms as avenues of wonder.

Overview of Panel Session:

Introduction of the Panel — Taylor Worley

Kutter Callaway, “Film and Contemplation”

Charles Howell, “Architecture and Contemplation” (cmh26@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Denny Kinlaw, “Literature and Contemplation” (kinlaw@erskine.edu)

Joy Moore, “Poetry and Contemplation”

Taylor Worley, “Visual Art and Contemplation”

Response from Natalie Carnes, (natalie_carnes@baylor.edu)

Q & A with panelists and audience.

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

The Role of the Visual Arts and Creativity in Moving Toward Healing, Hope, and Human Development

Trisha Posey, John Brown University

Four Honors students from John Brown University will present papers on the connection between the arts, creativity, healing, hope, and human development. These students include:

Karis Hall, “Shards of Happiness”

Responding to the texts *Notes from Underground* and *The Stranger*, as well as Charles Bukowski’s poem “Let it Enfold You,” this piece of visual art shows both the darkness of the world and the light and hope breaking through. As this mixed-media piece demonstrates, the power of being known and loved tears through the darkness and presents us with a beautiful balance of pain and hope that can only be possible through Christ.

Zipporah Jones, “A Call to Divine Creativity: The Invitation of “Babette’s Feast”

While today’s culture often sees creativity as something that is only possessed by the elite few, “Babette’s Feast” by Isak Dinesen explores creativity as part of the overall human calling as well as something that possesses a divine nature, particularly in relation to the Christian. In fact, this story invites the reader to consider the calling of creation for believers in Christ: Is partaking in the act of creation necessary to live out one’s truest divine calling as a Christian? Furthermore, does actively creating correlate to understanding God and oneself in a fuller capacity?

Katie Wood, “Oscar Wilde on Art and Morality in the Picture of Dorian Grey”

This paper discusses Oscar Wilde’s novel “The Picture of Dorian Grey,” and its meaning as a “moral book” with explicit attention to Wilde’s introduction to the book. In his introduction, he is explicitly stating that, though deeply moral in subject, no book is independently moral or immoral. This paper argues, however, that the body of Wilde’s novel contrasts this assertion and dissects how Wilde’s novel portrays both art and literature as morally influential.

Addy Brymer, “The Transformative Power of Art for Children Experiencing Trauma”

This presentation reflects on the transformative power of art for children experiencing trauma using a Christian art ministry as a case study. Art brings opportunity for children to access feelings and emotions and discuss them without fear of judgment. That creative drive comes from God — the ultimate Creator. This essay explores the connections between creativity, healing, and connection with God through reflection on an art ministry for children experiencing the effects of familial drug and alcohol addiction.

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

University of Mary Hardin-Baylor Undergraduate Panel

Brent Gibson, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

Upper-level English majors from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor will present a series of short papers on issues of faith in contemporary film.

Plenary, Featured, and Paper Presentations

The Story of Watch and Walk Ministry: A Case for Incarnation Through the Arts

Ebenezer Adu-Gyamfi, George W. Truett Theological Seminary

As beings created in the image of a creative Creator humans have unimaginable creative potential. For this reason, throughout history, many people have expressed their creativity by producing arts that have enriched human culture, religious practices, and social interaction. However, for over two centuries the Church has not benefited much from the arts mainly because she has been reluctant to embrace and incorporate diverse art forms in her liturgy and witness. In the book *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation through the Arts*, Jeremy Begbie (editor) attributes this ecclesial reluctance to intellectualism which has caused the Church to create an unfortunate wedge between theology and arts. Nonetheless, Begbie asserts that with the upsurge in interest in the arts, theology will need artistic practices to testify to the full council of God — a council that finds its ultimate expression in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. In this paper, I argue that without embracing contemporary arts and integrating them into her worship and verbal witness, the Church will struggle to articulate the message of the incarnation to the Twenty-First-century generation. This paper comprises three main sections. In the first section, I explore four essays in the book *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation through the Arts*. The essays are: "Through the Arts: Hearing, Seeing and Touching the Truth" by Trevor Hart, "Through Poetry: Particularity and the Call to Attention" by Andrew Rumsey, "Through Dance: Fully Human, Fully Alive" by Sarah B. Savage, and "Through Music: Sound Mix" by Jeremy Begbie. In the second section, I relate the authors' ideas with the story and activities of Watch and Walk Ministry to affirm my argument and show how various arts can be used to communicate the incarnational message of God. Finally, I draw on the essays and the Watch and Walk story to suggest a theological framework for artistic practices in the Church and concrete ways the local church can use contemporary arts to make the Word of God come alive to both Christians and non-Christians.

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

Mode of Knowing: Drawing as an Active Practice and Contribution to the Contemplative Life

Haelim Allen, Union University

In an age bombarded with visual and other types of “noises,” it is difficult to attend to anything worthwhile, let alone to contemplate God and His world. In Josef Pieper’s brief but rich book, *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation*, he confronts his generation with not being able to *see*, and he prescribes a remedy for this visual impairment: to be active in artistic creation. Unfortunately, in the thirty plus years since Pieper’s publication, our impairment may be greater than his. As a visual artist, teacher, and a Christian, I find that the act of drawing, and in turn *seeing*, may be one means of fostering attention towards God and His world. Drawing, in this sense, is not the quick, preparatory contribution to designs of paintings or other media by artists of yesteryears. Nor is drawing the automaton-like doodling by students who are not paying attention during their classes. Drawing, as I intend, is a concentrated effort of looking, seeing, beholding, and engaging with the subject in front of you, whether that subject is of a person, a landscape, a leaf, or any other phenomenon. This heightened sense of giving one’s attention through drawing is more akin to Simone Weil’s characterization of pure attention as being like a prayer and also as an act of generosity. As such, my paper examines how this approach cultivates attention, develops regard for the subject matter, and ultimately, is a means through which to contemplate the Source of not only the creative act, but also of the world that God has made in His Love.

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

Sketching a New Approach to Art and Ordinary Flourishing

Mark Allen, Southern Methodist University

Hannah Venable, University of Mary

The divide between traditional and modern conceptions of art has created a rift between the artworld and the general public. The artworld wonders if the public cares about art because so few seem interested in expanding their tastes beyond traditional modes, but the public sees little coming out of the modern artworld that resonates with common aesthetic sensibilities. This project takes the position that great works of art and deep experiences of art are not out of reach for the ordinary person and that both the artworld and the public can be brought into fruitful dialogue with each other. Early in the twentieth century, the artworld began shifting its focus toward qualities like meaning, progress, and originality. Ultimately, this led to radical forms of conceptualism that minimized values like craftsmanship and beauty, diminishing the connection between art and everyday living. And so, whether actively disregarded or passively overlooked, ordinary people tend to dismiss modern art as an abstract, high-brow enterprise, deflating the motivation to participate in art in general. What's the point in trying to engage works that are culturally, conceptually, and aesthetically inaccessible? Maybe seeking understanding in art is a waste of time?

Of course, good art can be and often is difficult, to make and to make sense of, but far too often work that is promoted as "complex" is merely opaque, front-loaded with philosophical assumptions and foreign grammar administered by artworld elites.

The authors of this project, however, believe that everyone is adequately qualified to freely engage works of art simply by virtue of being human. In fact, it is in our ordinary humanity that we find the purest, most primordial experience one can have with a work of art. To be clear, we are not calling for a renaissance of art that is easy or crude, but for a reawakening of common sensibilities from common folk who are empowered in their ordinariness to both create and engage works of art. Drawing on philosophers like Sartre and Danto, and artists like Cézanne and Duchamp, we establish a clearer picture of what art *is* so that we can establish *why* art is so important for human flourishing.

First, we argue that a philosophy of art centered around the qualities of meaning, craftsmanship, and beauty aids a proper understanding of art through a flexible but discerning "two-out-of-three" conditional. If works characterized mostly by meaning can be reclassified as a new form of philosophy, while works characterized by beauty, craftsmanship, and meaning remain under the conventional category of art, then we can more fully appreciate both traditional and modern works, making sense of them on their own terms.

Second, we insist that works of art must spill out of the frame, the museum, and the music hall, in ways that are lived-out in human flourishing. Through creation or participation, art has the unique ability to expose human suffering and cultivate freedom. More than this, we shape our lives as works of art through self-creation and, in this way, are drawn beyond the material world toward transcendence. In summary, this project attempts to bridge the divide between the artworld and ordinary people by narrowing the definition of art on the one hand, but expanding it on the other. This approach is informed by the diverse backgrounds of the authors, both of whom have doctorates in philosophy, but one is a professional artist who teaches advertising and design while the other is a trained musician who teaches philosophy and aesthetics.

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

The Hope of Certainty

Christina Ananias, Duke Divinity School

In the final entry of the public debate between the formalist art historian Michael Fried and social history art critic T. J. Clark, Clark wrote, in what reads as something close to exasperation, “It may even be that a *religious perspective* is the only possible one from which a cogent defense of modernism in its recent guise can be mounted.” Clark’s exasperation was fueled by what he saw as a dearth of shared values in the practice and criticism of modernist visual art. From Clark’s perspective, Fried’s confident judgements of certain art movements and exultant descriptions of his experiences with certain artworks reeked of objectivity and transcendence — both relics of the West’s religious past. In making this provocative statement, Clark mischievously wonders whether it might actually take a commitment to a transcendent reality (something Fried would most certainly deny) to make sense of modernism’s movements.

In this presentation, I will take Clark’s suggestion and attempt a “cogent defense” of one set of modernist paintings from a “religious perspective,” considering the innovative and timely ways in which these paintings contribute to theological knowledge. The paintings I will examine were created at the end of the nineteenth century by Paul Cézanne: a set of almost 30 portraits of the artist’s wife. Cézanne’s works embody a sort of negativity, which Clark sees as a quintessential characteristic of modernist painting. In other words, Clark understands Cézanne’s impulse toward abstraction as skepticism about traditional artistic forms’ ability to represent adequately the reality of his subject. In this way, the paintings can be understood as protesting against traditional representational techniques.

My analysis of the paintings will illustrate the ways in which skepticism about visual art’s ability to convey its subject with perfect clarity resonates with Christianity’s apophatic epistemology. Pure and perfect knowledge of God, nature, or even oneself is simply impossible in Christian epistemology, much less the representation of that knowledge in paint. Accordingly, I will show how Cézanne’s abstraction in painting his wife demonstrates an apophatic hesitation that avoids the pretense of epistemological closure. In an interview, Cézanne was once asked “what is your greatest hope?” to which he responded, “Certainty.” While Christians must admit that creatures can never perfectly comprehend the incomprehensible, the central event of Christianity — the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ — grants the possibility of real knowledge of God, nature, and ourselves. I will conclude by showing how this Christological double vision — which issues in the hope of certainty — is embedded in iconophilic defenses of representational art. I will then sketch how a similar logic might be at work in Cézanne’s portraiture. In tracing the iconophilic, yet particularly modern apophatic and revelatory techniques of Cézanne, we will come to see the artist’s uniquely visual sacramental rendering of his first love: ‘nature.’

BSFC 2022 Proposals Review Document

Just Press “Play”: Re-discovering Discovery in the Filmmaking Process

Matthew Aughtry, Baylor University

In the first full academic year of the pandemic, I set out with the help of others to move Baylor Chapel into online space through creating around 60 original videos. In the midst of filming dozens of sermons for the first semester, we made the decision to begin the second semester by creating short narrative films based on the parables of Jesus. Most of these films (8 in total) were written over the course of a single day and each one was filmed in 1-2 days. Despite this quick turnaround, these are the videos students consistently seek me out to talk about.

I want to spend some time talking about these films and how we used “art” to “seek understanding” in Baylor Chapel even in the midst of a difficult and trying year. I would also like to focus specifically on the idea of “playing” in the filmmaking process and how the constraints of time and resources in this case demanded that I return to a mode of moviemaking I haven’t experienced since moving into my life as a “professional.”

I want to talk about “play” as a way of discovering where meaning is embedded in a scene when making a film, where meaning is located in a story when watching a film, and where meaning is to be found in life as we inhabit the stories told by Jesus.

Art is a form of play and, as we play, we discover knowledge which becomes available to us only through means of imagination.

The Healing Arts

Lauren Barron, Baylor University

This session will explore ways in which the arts are rapidly gaining acceptance in the field of medical education and training. The 2020 publication of the Fundamental Role of the Arts and Humanities in Medical Education (FRAHME) report by the American Association of Medical Colleges documents this movement. This presentation is a survey of ways in which the arts are currently being integrated in medical humanities both locally here at Baylor and beyond. Both theoretical principles and practical application will be featured and richly supplemented with images and recordings. Examples include:

- From the visual arts, “learning to look” using visual thinking strategies as an allegory for close observation of patients in the clinical setting.
- From the literary arts, the rise of narrative medicine and the use of “close reading” in literature as a way into a phenomenological understanding of disease and illness.
- The use of music in the care of dementia patients as a way of bypassing cognitive deficits in and “quickening” the emotional and relational abilities that are for the most part neglected by the traditional medical model of care.
- From the theater arts, the use of improvisation to teach communication skills for students and the transfer of these skills into encounters with patients

The idea of the arts as a different but not lesser “way of knowing” from the sciences will be explored and we will make an argument for the ways in which bridging the arts and sciences can enhance understanding and contribute to human flourishing—both for patients and practitioners.

Shakespeare and the Resurrection

Sean Benson, Professor of English and Frank W. Mayborn Chair, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

If art is a gift whose practice leads to a deeper order of understanding, then we might ask ourselves what insight into the order of things Shakespeare offers us. I want to focus on how Shakespeare uses a staging convention, the recognition scene, to explore the theatrical potential of Christ's Resurrection from the dead.

In no less than fourteen of his plays, characters who have been separated or lost, sometimes for years, suddenly reappear—seemingly returning from the dead. In the classical recognition scene, such moments are explained away in naturalistic terms—a character was lost at sea but survived, or abducted and eventually escaped, and so on. Shakespeare never entirely invalidates such explanations on the realism of his stage, but at the same time he subtly superimposes the Resurrection on his recognition scenes. He does so by using tropes and figurations of resurrection to suggest that these reunions offer theatrical equivalents of the Resurrection, even if these stage adaptations understandably pale before and cannot live up to that one earthshaking (see Luke 23:44-45) event.

As the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar noted, almost in passing but with lapidary precision, Shakespeare “takes the risk of portraying the return from the realm of the dead as a pure gift to those in mourning. In these self-contained [romances] the Christian resurrection from the dead becomes the reappearance of those believed dead” (*Theo-Drama* 3:384). Indeed, characters who have been lost for years suddenly reappear and thus seem to have come back, tantalizingly, from the dead. This leitmotif of the Resurrection surfaces most often in the comedies and romances, as one might expect, but also in the tragedies where we are made aware of a failed resurrection of a dead character.

For the purposes of this paper, I want to glance briefly at a failed resurrection in *King Lear*, but then turn my attention to the recognition scenes in two plays, *Twelfth Night* and *The Winter's Tale*. In each of them, Shakespeare uses the reunion of separated characters to remind his audience of the power of the Resurrection where all shall be made well.

I argue that Shakespeare gestures in the midst of his plays' worldliness, their grounding in the material conditions of the everyday, to something beyond. His doing so invalidates neither the quotidian material of life nor the realism of his stage. Nonetheless, Shakespeare simultaneously brings into focus the immaterial and transcendent: he turns our eyes towards the penumbra of the Resurrection, even as he adapts it for the civic, and very much mundane, stage.

Along with David Bevington and others, Frank Kermode has observed of Shakespeare's plays “that unmistakable flavour of Christian joy at the ‘high miracle’ which turns the discord of human tragedy into the harmony of divine comedy.” This is hardly the consensus view among Shakespeareans, however, whose reading of the plays is decidedly materialist and secular, as I hope to demonstrate.

Nonetheless, the resurrection from the dead is a leitmotif Shakespeare employs to register the human desire to transcend death and live reunited and reconciled with others. His art is a gift whose practice leads to a deeper understanding of the eschatological order of things. Shakespeare is one of those artists, as the late Philip Rieff observed, who sees “in what there is that which is”; his recognition scenes point to reconciliations with those we have lost, and gesture toward the life of the world to come.

Things Fall Apart. The Center Cannot Hold: Baroque Culture the Last Synthesis

Brian Braman, Boston College

Louis Dupre in his *Passages to Modernity* writes: Given the fact that Baroque culture was anything but religiously homogeneous, “it may appear preposterous to present the culture of the Baroque as having realized, however provisionally, the ideal of an integral Christian Humanism. Yet in spite of the “tensions and inconsistencies,” there is within Baroque Culture a comprehensive spiritual vision that unifies the culture. In other words, Baroque Culture is the last attempt to integrate in a profound way the relationship between nature and grace.

The purpose of this paper will be to flesh out in a richer way how one might see the culture of the Baroque as “vertically linked to a transcendent source from which, via a descending scale of mediating bodies, the human creator draws his power.” In short, it is the relationship between the human and the divine, the intimate relationship of nature and grace that uniquely distinguishes the Baroque world view.

'Learn of the wise and perpend': Educative Play, Art, and Wonder in Shakespearean Comedy, As You Like It

Clinton Brand, University of St. Thomas

Articulating a pattern of meaning that is basic to Shakespearean comedy, this paper argues that *As You Like It* is a play of educative metamorphosis and more particularly a play about the very play that is transformational education. In the opening scene, Orlando complains about his “servitude” and want of “good education.” Rosalind becomes his teacher and rescues her lover from empty idealism and weepy sentimentality for a more mature reckoning with the demands of romantic love. Orlando’s education is assuredly an erotic education, but one better understood in a more nearly Platonic sense of eros than in its more modern Freudian and post-Freudian reductions — that is to say an education that proceeds from the wound of eros to challenge and to enact a turning or re-orientation of the soul (periogoge) for a greater openness to transcendence. *As You Like It* invites Orlando and the play’s readers and spectators through “the Tudor play of mind” to an imaginative, literary, rhetorical, even philosophic education, which is, I suggest, fundamentally an education by play and playing, teaching and learning at the intersection of desiring and pretending (faining and feigning), an education in wonder and in the play of analogy and the play of supposition, all for the better opening of souls to reality and for the enlargement of human sympathy and inter-personal communion. Huizinga, Pieper, and Gadamer have all, from their various perspectives, recovered an appreciation of play, as consecrated leisure, as festival, as ritual, and as communal participation, in ways important for understanding art, religion, culture, and education. As we see represented in the Forest of Arden, such play provides a field of freedom, one might say a leafy campus, as a place of trial and error for trying on and trying out ideas, a place exempt from many of the social constraints of the workaday world yet not without the pressures of agon and eros (contest and desire) for the exercise, testing, and formation of character. In Shakespeare’s comedy, educative metamorphosis is variously symbolized as conversion, as magic, and as matrimony, all wrought by mirrors of art, entertaining analogies and suppositions “as if” — “as you liken it” and “if you like it” and as see yourself reflected back for a “fusion of horizons.” The last scene of *As You Like It* takes us from the play of analogy and the play of supposition to the threshold of religious mystery: “If truth hold true contents . . . Then is there mirth in heaven / When earthly things, made even / Atone together.” This paper explores the possibility of such “atonement,” such at-one-ment or a-tune-ment, as limned in the wonder working of Shakespeare’s educative comedy.

The Resistance of Art: Wounds that Must Not Be Healed

Thomas Breedlove, Baylor University

Can art that wounds also heal? Is there healing that comes precisely from being wounded? “There are wounds,” Jean-Louis Chrétien writes, “that one must not heal, for they are the source of our loving intimacy with our highest task, the one we have received, impossibly, without having sought it” (2003, 2). Can art reveal or create such wounds? The aim of this paper is to consider the relationship between wounds depicted in art and wounds created in encountering art and to ask of both these wounds how they might shape an understanding of art and its role in theological and moral perception. What I will argue, considering these questions through the fiction of James Baldwin and the phenomenology of Jean-Louis Chrétien, is that the wounding power of art in both Baldwin and Chrétien’s phenomenology comes from its resistance to incorporation and that this resistance presents an important lesson for theological imagination.

The wounding power of art in Baldwin comes often in its resistance to incorporation in theology, a resistance layered through the complicated depiction of art in his short story “Sonny’s Blues.” In the story’s final scene, the narrator listens to his brother play jazz and speaks both of the freedom offered by his brother’s music and the way in which, even while they listen, the world waits outside, “as hungry as a tiger, and that trouble stretched above us, longer than the sky” (2009, 48). Baldwin leaves the chasm between these perspectives open; the narrator is wounded by his brother’s art which does not solve their suffering but transforms it. Art itself, the art the narrator hears and the art the reader encounters, resists solution and resolution. Baldwin’s art speaks powerfully to theology even while it wounds theology in its continued resistance to Christianity itself. His fiction and essays unveil the power of the flesh, of desire, of life, of the depths to which life resists violence. But for Baldwin violence and coercion are often inseparable from the Christian God. Theology can listen to Baldwin honestly only when theology consents to the possibility of being wounded by his art.

Trying to make sense of these layers of wounding in Baldwin, the second part of this paper turns to Chrétien and to the ways in which his phenomenology traces art’s resistance to incorporation in the stability of certainty, its capacity to bring to light the ungraspable excess that shapes and wounds human finitude. Here I shall look in particular to Chrétien’s account of Delacroix’s depiction of Jacob’s wrestling with the angel, to the wounding depicted in the painting, the wounding of Delacroix’s act of painting, and the wounding of encountering the painting itself. For Chrétien, art wounds precisely because it refuses closure; because in this refusal art brings to light the contingency of human existence itself and the gift of existence which responds to a call that can only be heard in the response of finite life. Here, drawing on Chrétien, I will suggest how not healing the wounds of Baldwin’s art might create a different sort of healing for Christian theology, one born not of resolution but by a recognition of the complexity of affirming the Incarnate presence.

“Grief as Landscape: Embodied Geography in Contemporary American Literature”

Aaron Brown, LeTourneau University

In *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis laments the lack of a “map of sorrow” as he describes grief as a “winding valley” with a “totally new landscape” around every bend. The close figuration of landscape with the inexpressible nature of human emotion is nothing new to American literature. Yet grief, a concept made increasingly relevant in our twenty-first century age of anxiety, has become a staple for contemporary novelists and poets. This paper examines the use of setting as a means of character formation and spiritual development in three writers who embody the spirit of “art seeking understanding.”

Three American writers, George Saunders, Jesmyn Ward, and Christian Wiman, navigate the complexities of grief through the embodiment of landscape. From the cemetery of Saunders’s novel *Lincoln in the Bardo* to the spirit-filled world of Ward’s Bois Sauvage landscape in *Sing Unburied Sing* to the “half-standing house” of Christian Wiman’s poem “Small Prayer in a Hard Wind,” grief is embodied in landscapes both made and unmade as a space for characters to navigate. It is the process of navigating these landscapes, both physically and psychologically, that enables characters to reach a new territory where unspoken emotions like grief become fully inhabited and resonant, “something understood,” in the words of George Herbert.

Thomas Reid on the Elusive Character of Beauty

Todd Buras, Baylor University

In his often overlooked essay on Taste (1785), Thomas Reid analyzed the complex mental operation by which we discern and relish the beauty of sensible objects. Reid's analysis of both beauty and the the experience of beauty seamlessly integrates art and the quest for understanding. According to Reid, the beauty of sensible objects is derivative, like the light reflected by the moon. Original beauty—the light source—is some admirable trait, or excellence, in the mind responsible for the features that catch our eye. Beautiful things on this theory point beyond themselves. The experience of beauty, correlatively, calls us to understand the true source of our aesthetic interest and delight, to pursue a rational appreciation of the beauty we instinctively enjoy. The beauties of nature, on this approach, play a special role in leading to an understanding of God's reality and goodness. In the context of Reid's epistemology, the broadly theistic beliefs grounded in the faculty of taste are not just immediately formed, they are immediately justified. In Reid's philosophy, art thus plays a foundational role in grounding and motivating a broadly theistic framework for understanding everything.

Singing The Lord's Song in Babylon: The power of Leonard Cohen's poetic/lyrical imagination

Joel Burnell, Evangelical School of Theology - Wroclaw, Poland

As a poet and singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen drew on many religious traditions, intertwining them in a manner that can perhaps best be described as perichoresis. This paper explores how his art expressed the thoroughly earthly yet deeply spiritual journey he invited us to share through his music and lyrics. Cohen was a master of words and images, who both created his own metaphors and recast those found in Judaism, Christianity, Sufi mysticism (Rumi) and Zen Buddhism. He frequently revisited certain favorite themes: Jerusalem and Babylon, aka Boogie Street; Christ, the cross and the crucifix; war; freedom and bondage; the ideal versus the real; the brokenness of the world, of our lives, of our relationships, of everything; love, the place where man and woman as well as heaven and earth meet.

The scope and power of Cohen's imagination serves at once to uproot and to ground our religious sensitivities and spiritual practices. In the creative process he drew heavily on Jewish liturgy, as well as on his own profound nature mysticism. He admired and valued such spiritual virtues as faithfulness, sacrifice for others, and love. In navigating our beautiful but broken world, he looked to role models such as Moses, Jacob and Jesus, who proved faithful to themselves, to God and to others. Though we fall short of their example, we can learn from them how to carry on in the here and now. In the closing lines of the song "By The Rivers Dark", Cohen turns the lament of Psalm 137 on its head. Our life is not lived in Jerusalem but in exile. Nevertheless, Cohen declares that even in Babylon we can learn to sing The Lord's song.

*By the rivers dark / In a wounded dawn / I live my life / In Babylon /
Though I take my song / From a withered limb / Both song and tree / They sing for him
Be the truth unsaid / And the blessing gone / If I forget / My Babylon*

Measuring the (Im)Measurable

Kutter Callaway, Fuller Theological Seminary
Rosemary Al-Kireh, University of Washington
Wade Rowatt, Baylor University
Sarah Schnitker, Baylor University

The primary aim of this proposal is to present findings from a series of empirical research studies designed and conducted by a cross-disciplinary team of theologians, psychologists, and artists, each of which examined a series of inter-related questions. Namely, If the philosophical and theological accounts of art's capacity to prompt spiritual and/or religious forms of cognition and perception are reliably accurate (or perhaps even "true"), then what observable evidence might there be to corroborate these accounts? Furthermore, how might we quantify this evidence in scientifically rigorous ways such that we could reasonably make both predictive and generalizable inferences about the way in which art functions in contemporary society?

Our exploration of these questions unfolded in two stages. In the first stage, we developed a set of visual stimuli created specifically for use in experimentation. To do so, we (a) interviewed artists to create basic categories of spiritually evocative art, (b) commissioned original photographic art to be used as visual stimuli, (c) manipulated those photos by breaking standard aesthetic "rules" of photography, and (d) compared the original art photos and the manipulated photos with a non-art picture set normed for valence and arousal.

In the second stage, we designed and conducted a sequence of three empirical studies that made use of this set of visual stimuli in order to test the question of whether the perceived quality of photographic art and the perception that an image is or is not "art" at all might contribute to shifts in God concepts, spiritual insights/perceptions, and/or feelings of transcendence and awe.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of our project, our studies were informed not only by scholarship in the humanities, but also by psychological art research, which has focused almost exclusively on the psychological outputs of aesthetic evaluation and aesthetic emotions. Indeed, many of the existing research projects in empirical aesthetics tend to reduce an otherwise complex and wide-ranging phenomenon (i.e., aesthetic experience) down to a matter of aesthetic "liking" and/or emotional "pleasingness." This (over)emphasis is even more interesting given how frequently everyday artgoers tend to describe their encounter with art not merely in terms of emotions but in terms of self-transcendence, spiritual insight, and even, at times, religious forms of understanding.

What remains underexplored in the literature is how exposure to art may elicit changes not just in one's emotional state in general, but in these kinds of self-transcendent, spiritually oriented outcomes. Thus, our proposal examines these psychological dynamics in order to clarify the causal pathways that connect aesthetic experiences of art and self-transcendent emotions and, more broadly, to generate predictive hypotheses that can explain why art, in distinction to other cultural artifacts, affects art-goers in such spiritually profound ways.

Art and Spirituality: Developing a Theoretical Framework

William Catling, Professor and Department Chair of Art and Design, Azusa Pacific University

Throughout the history of art and in contemporary art practice there is evidence of a deep and expansive spirituality that flows through much of the art and within many of the artists. This presentation explores some examples of artists and movements that engaged in the integration of faith and spirituality from the early 19th century through the present. The artists selected are found in connection with established religious practices as well as broader beliefs in the invisible realm and its relation to the physical world.

There is a debate regarding the way spirituality and religion interact. Some argue that Religion is the larger sphere and spirituality is a subset of this dynamic while others affirm that Spirituality is the greater field and religions are specific manifestations of this belief system.

This presentation also lays a basic groundwork for the construction of a theoretical framework for making, viewing, and understanding art and spirituality. The content is designed for a diverse audience, addressing issues related art and spirituality as it is concerned with art making, art viewing, art theory and art history.

Loving the Good by Learning the Beautiful: How a Thematic Approach to Music Appreciation Promotes Cultural Stewardship and Intellectual Humility

Ted Cockle, Baylor University

Katherine Cockle, Musician, Musikgarten

Music appreciation courses have long been standard in postsecondary general education programs (Ellis, 2002). Together with other introductory courses, music appreciation was intended to round out a university education to promote the development of skills needed for citizenship and flourishing (Glanzer, 2022). General education was about, among other things, learning to love the good. Despite such lofty visions, musicologists often quip, “music appreciation is the course no student wants to take and no professor wants to teach.” Comments such as these make sense given the fact that the majority of music appreciation classes (and textbooks that guide them) take a historical timeline approach to music education. In this approach, professors force students into the world of art (classical) music through pre-1600 Gregorian chants. Chants have an important place in music history, but they are far from an accessible entry point for those new to the riches of art music. A new approach to music appreciation is needed to ensure future generations of students can learn to love the good by learning the beauty of art music.

In this session, we will present a brief history of the goals of general education with special attention given to music appreciation courses and, using recent scholarship on moral formation—demonstrate where current approaches are lacking. In response to current deficiencies, we will present a new thematic approach to music appreciation that we believe is better suited to achieve the lofty goals of general education. In our new approach, students engage the practice of “musicking” (Small, 1998), making and engaging music together, through a progression of human themes found in history (e.g. Music and Politics, Music and Faith). In a given class session, students will explore a theme by interacting with music from multiple eras. As they compare music from history and today, students discover the deeply human beauty and cultural function of music. We will conclude the presentation by demonstrating how this approach and these larger human themes equip students to engage questions of “the good” and promote the cultivation of virtues such as cultural stewardship and intellectual humility.

Seeing the Light

Elizabeth Corey, Baylor University

Sarah Marcum, Baylor University

TBD

"The Homes of the Soul": Understanding Faith through Spiritual Bedroom Journeys

Jill Cornish, Baylor University

Sainte Thérèse d'Avila's 1670 treatise, *Le Château intérieur, ou les demeures de l'ame*, ("The Interior Castle, or the homes of the soul") utilizes the physical and spiritual aspects of the domestic interior to liken the soul to a château with various rooms in which one welcomes God. Sainte Thérèse situates herself within a long tradition of French literature which asserts domestic space, particularly the bedroom, as a metaphor for the human soul. Secular and spiritual authors alike would continue to adopt the bedroom as a site for philosophical and theological inquiry well into the nineteenth century in France. Among the most famous of these texts, *Le Voyage autour de ma chambre* ("The Journey around my bedroom"), belonged to Xavier de Maistre, who seemingly began the trend of consciously taken bedroom journeys in 1794 as a parody of the popular travelogue. Following his lead, other authors wrote alternately parodic and introspective versions of their own bedroom journeys; and a small sub-set of authors even used the bedroom journey genre as an opportunity for spiritual reflection and instruction. This presentation will focus on a handful of these bedroom journeys to demonstrate how French authors of the nineteenth century used the creative literary space of the bedroom in an attempt to achieve a greater understanding of self, God, and our place within His domain, both on earth and one day in Heaven.

Language of the Angels: The Power of Poetry in Early Modern Devotion

David Davis, Houston Baptist University

Since Barbara Lewalski's paradigmatic study *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*, a great deal of scholarly energy has been spent on identifying the doctrinal and dogmatic meanings embedded within early modern religious verse. Unfortunately, this debate often detracts from a much more obvious fact about religious poetry: that in the period it was understood to be a primary means by which a reader could prepare themselves to experience God.

Poetry, secular and sacred, was believed to have a power to prepare the human soul for rapturous encounters, opening up the imagination and transcending the limits of human reason. Perhaps it is no surprise that devotional theologians of the period, like Richard Baxter's *The saints' everlasting rest*, deployed divine poetry alongside their instructions, exhortations, and explorations of the human-divine relationship. Poetry not only fashioned mental images that aided in devotional practice, but it also served as a preparatory agent, stirring and impressing upon the soul in such a way that simulated divine rapture. From premier poets like Philip Sidney and John Donne to less well-known names like Joshua Sylvester and Lady Margaret Cavendish, poetry was seen to wield an almost unique ability to stimulate the soul, in a manner that surpassed even visual art, imitating the phenomenology of divine rapture.

This paper will examine some of the more popular divine poets in early modern England, including the George Herbert, Francis Quarles, John Donne, Henry Vaughan, and Thomas Traherne, with particular interest in how poetry accentuated readers' desire for, what Constance Furey has described as, a relational exchange between the soul and God. Highlighting different imagery that such poetry often evoked, we will see how poetry was intended to develop the imagination appropriately, as a preparative for divine encounter, as well as how this poetry was part of a much larger religious culture, common to both Catholic and Protestant devotion, that continuously pursued an encounter with God.

Becoming By Beholding: The Imagination and Spiritual Formation

Lanta Davis, Indiana Wesleyan University

We become what we behold. Historic Christians often compared spiritual and character development to wax: our souls, like wax, take on the shape of the stamps imprinted upon it. They believed that if wish to become distinctively Christian, we must behold distinctively Christian forms. Intentionally cultivating the imagination was essential to spiritual formation.

But this imaginative practice, called “the art of fashioning the soul” by medieval Christians, has largely been lost in today’s spiritual formation practices, the average Christian’s imagination has been shaped by other forms, particularly the powerful counter-imaginings of Christian nationalism and consumerism. In this presentation, I will discuss the role of the imagination in nationalism and consumerism, and contrast it with the historic Christian imagination.

In particular, I will contrast how recovering imaginative works from historic Christian orthodoxy can help retrain our imagination and “stamp” the wax of our soul into a distinctively Christian form. I will discuss two specific examples of the imagination’s role in forming beliefs about God, humanity, and creation: the Christ the Pantocrator icon can help correct a Christian nationalist Jesus; and medieval bestiaries and early Christian mosaics can help us rethink our consumeristic understanding of Creation and our role within it. While these are just two examples among many, they will help demonstrate both how the historic Church cultivated the imagination and how we might begin to recover and reintroduce imaginative practices into spiritual formation.

Art Seeking Just Doctoring

John Eberly, Fischer Clinic; Duke Divinity School

It is often repeated that medicine is an “art.” But modern medicine has lost much of its artfulness. As forewarned by Abraham Flexner in his 1910 report to reform medical education, modern medical training has transitioned from artistry to industry. Medicine is beset by bureaucracy, technocracy, and a turn to efficiency that often leaves patients and practitioners bewildered, demoralized, and dehumanized, best captured by the “burnout” phenomenon which continues to plague the medical profession.

Medicine has produced various treatment plans to diagnose and treat this eclipse of humanity and lost morale, including a renewed focus on the arts. For decades now, medical trainees have looked to visual art to sharpen perception and diagnostic acumen, theater to foster empathy and communication, and literature to practice recognition and reflection. Indeed, the recent AMA Journal of Ethics July 2022 issue focuses explicitly on arts-based initiatives in health care research.

And yet, skepticism remains. What difference do the arts make in the clinical ethic of one formed by art, as compared to the one who has not been so formed? As Clark Carlton has written, if all the arts do is baptize health care with “a series of metaphors, points of view, and attitudes,” then it would seem the arts will do little to reform a broken medicine, besides galvanizing those who were already aesthetes to begin with.

As Wendell Berry writes in *The Art of Loading Brush*, rather than art seeking a “vague understanding,” we would hope that art seeks “a something” that manifests in the real work at hand. This paper seeks to explore the “something” that the arts manifest in the moral work of health care. I will continue a conversation at the intersection of the medical humanities, medical professional identity formation, medical ethics, and aesthetics, having developed this dialogue “in the wild” of patient care and medical training, as well as with colleagues in Columbia’s Center for Clinical Medical Ethics’ Medicine and the Art of Ethics Symposium. This paper will argue and ask:

1. Medical professionals, and especially trainees, are thirsty for wonder in their increasingly industrialized and mechanized work. Beauty and aesthetics can sensitize the clinician to “stand under” the ground of being that is the patient.
2. Skepticism toward the decades of “arts in medicine” interventions is warranted, as many seem to only attract those who are already looking at art and reading poetry, or reify the clinician’s tendency to objectify, dissect, and schematize.
3. Can clinicians and medical educators seek specificity about “the something” which the arts bring about in medical work, while respecting the artist’s work as such (work that surely bears no debt to explain or constrain itself on medicine’s terms)?
4. Finally, how can the arts permeate the work of medicine in ways that are practically wise and morally just? Medical trainees are used to seeking an understanding of things, but how might the arts form them to stand under a better, more beautiful, and more just doctoring?

Art Seeking Understanding within the Nigerian Church: Prognosis of a Church Historian

Felix Enegho, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Nigeria

The place of art in the life of any society cannot be underestimated. Art can be in the forms of paintings, photography, installations, found objects, plays and architecture among others. The Church has continued to explore art in every aspect for several centuries. Works of Christian artists have been well recorded in history, and scholars, students and Christians have continued to work assiduously towards a better understanding of art in our world. This paper aims at stating clearly how art is capable of contributing to moral and spiritual perception, sensitivity and character formation. The effort would also be made to assess how the power of imagination, as a faculty of the human mind, can affect the life of a Christian. How is visual Christian art related to Exodus 20:4 and how do different modes of faith contribute to the development of the Christian faith? These issues will be addressed by taking into cognizance how well Christians have been concerned about the notion of faith-seeking understanding. One may be tempted to see Art from a purely secular perspective. But this work will also attempt to examine art from the Christian dimension. Among many traditional Africans, there is a strong use of signs and symbols in various spheres of life. One would have expected that the early missionaries who came to evangelize within the African continent would have utilized the African artworks in their efforts at Christianizing the Africans. There are records which showed that art depicted in the many gods in Nigeria for instance was often criticized as idols and Africans were often told to discard them. Among the Roman Catholics and adherents of African Indigenous Churches, there is the extensive use of images/symbols which are in the form of artworks. Again, other church denominations are always so highly critical of such practices. Among the findings in this paper is the fact that for Art to be comprehended in our world and Christianity, there is the need for a change in our mentality, meaning that paintings, found objects, architecture etc should be interpreted using the lenses of our various cultures and traditions. In a world that has become highly secularised amid various faiths and traditions, the Christian faith should use art as a channel for the realization of its ideals without sacrificing its principles on the "altar" of secularism. The research methodology used in this paper is a combination of socio-historical and analytic approaches. This paper concludes that if we are to understand deeply faith as a gift of grace which grows toward deeper knowledge, then Christians in our world must begin to appreciate art as a gift whose practice is capable of leading to a deeper order of understanding of our global community by the various cultures and traditions.

The Aesthetics of Doctrine in Irenaeus of Lyons' Appeals to the Rule of Truth

Alex Fogleman, Baylor University

This paper explores the question of “art seeking understanding” by considering the aesthetic nature of early Christian presentations of doctrinal formulae, namely, the so-called “rule of truth” or “rule of faith.” Such “rules”, and their later cousins, baptismal and confessional creeds, might appear to have little to do with art, beauty, or aesthetics. They are, one might suppose, about the content of faith, not the experiential or aesthetic form of the Christian life. They are about conceptual precision, not poetics or praise. In this paper, however, I want to reconsider, with the help of the second-century theologian, Irenaeus of Lyons, how we might think about the aesthetic nature of credal language. Without downplaying the importance of doctrinal conviction or clarity, I want to let Irenaeus help us reflect on what it might mean to say that understanding truth, especially the truth of Jesus Christ as God in human flesh, requires attention to aesthetic form, a certain way of looking at things. With Irenaeus, we learn that knowing and loving the triune God is inseparable from a certain mode of attending to the phenomenal world.

Attention to the aesthetic character of theology has not gone unnoticed among readers of Irenaeus. It was Hans Urs von Balthasar, in his seven-volume opus on theological aesthetics, *The Glory of the Lord*, that did much to rehabilitate Irenaeus as a theologian of beauty. More recently, Eric Osborn and John Behr have discerned the centrality of aesthetics in Irenaeus. Osborn describes him as a decidedly “visually oriented” theologian in whom one finds a dual emphasis on the criteria of “truth and fitness, the logical and the aesthetic.” John Behr, meanwhile, describes Irenaeus’s method as “phenomenological” in character. “Rather than speculating about beings, forces, or actions behind the appearances,” Behr writes, “Irenaeus keeps to the appearances, seeking out the wisdom of God in the revelation or manifestation of God in Christ, as this has shown itself. Taking this line of scholarship as a point of departure, I consider in particular how Irenaeus’s writing about the Rule of Truth reveals an aesthetic account of Christian knowing. When we look not only for the content of the Rule but also the contexts in which Irenaeus appeals to the Rule, we find that perceiving the truth of the Incarnate Christ is grounded in an aesthetic perception of Scripture and creation. The Rule of Truth offers a unitive *theoria* that enables the Christian to understand the coherence of the divine economy, which in turn guides the Christian to worship the One God as both creator and redeemer. The Rule of Truth, in other words, is not simply a proto-credal outline of dogmatic content but, in its concise expression, a pedagogical device that presents the unity of vision necessary to hold together the diverse aspects of God’s creative and redemptive work. Importantly, this work manifests not simply in orthodoxy but in doxology; the Rule allows Christians not only to know but also to love and praise the divine Artist as revealed in the divine artistry.

You are a myth and so am I: C.S. Lewis on the Mythological Status of (Real) Persons

Robert Garcia, Baylor University

In this talk, I explore C.S. Lewis's views on personhood and myth. Drawing upon Lewis's views, I propose a way to understand ourselves as art, in particular as myth.

In a well-known scene from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Lucy Pevensie notices a book on Tumnus's bookshelf entitled "Is Man A Myth?". It is natural to read this title as posing the question as to whether or not human beings exist. Indeed, Tumnus seems to have been in doubt about our existence. However, by considering Lewis's views about (a) the nature of human persons as unique images of God and (b) the nature of myth as transpositional, sacramental, and possibly factual or true, I argue that the book title can plausibly — or at least fruitfully! — be read as posing a more interesting question: Persons are real but are they also myths? I argue that Lewis would answer in the affirmative. On his view, each person is a myth in the sense that she concretely transposes a transcendent reality, specifically, some aspect of God that she is uniquely capable of transposing.

Like other myths, a person embodies a "breaking through" of the transcendent. Lewis famously takes the person and work of Jesus to be a true myth. This raises the searching question: Supposing I am a myth, am I a true myth? To conclude my talk, I will draw upon Lewis's views about the nature of persons to suggest that Lewis would answer the latter question as follows: You are a true myth in so far as you become who you are meant to become has a unique image of God. To borrow language from the call for proposals, on Lewis's view it turns out that each person, as a divine artwork, is a gift whose practice leads to a deeper order of understanding.

Emblematic Art and the Bible in Seventeenth-Century Protestant Poetry

Wesley Garey, Charleston Southern University

Along with their other theological distinctives, the Protestant Reformers are known for their emphasis on the spoken preaching of Scripture, which was often accompanied by their rejection of many of the visual aspects of medieval Christianity, such as church artwork associated with the cult of the saints. As a result, the Protestant culture of early modern England is often described as prioritizing the verbal over the visual, with some scholars going so far as to suggest that English Protestant authors were driven by iconoclastic anxieties about art and the imagination (Greenblatt, 1980; Diehl, 1986). However, early modern Protestants sometimes approached the visual arts in surprisingly positive ways. In particular, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestant devotional poets interwove the visual and the verbal arts in the early modern genre of “emblem-books.” In this multimodal genre, authors juxtaposed a series of visual images against enigmatic poems that explicated each image’s hidden meaning. Initially associated with humanist and Jesuit authors, popular emblem-books were also composed by Protestants such as the Huguenot poet Georgette de Montenay (1540-1581) and the Anglican poet Francis Quarles (1592-1644).

This presentation examines how later Protestant authors used elements of the emblem-book tradition to interpret both the Bible and the visible world of creation, understood as the “book of nature.” In particular, I focus on *Order and Disorder*, a recently rediscovered biblical epic by the seventeenth-century English Puritan poet Lucy Hutchinson (1620-1681). Although this epic-length retelling of Genesis does not include visual images, Hutchinson draws on the emblem-book tradition by framing the creatures and events of the creation week as “emblems” that display moral and spiritual lessons. For Hutchinson, the natural world is a divinely inscribed emblem-book, and Scripture provides the hermeneutic lens for Christians to see and read nature rightly. Hutchinson’s Puritan poem thus displays an unexpectedly positive perspective on nature and the senses as means of divine self-revelation, even as she also emphasizes the need for Scripture and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Greater attention to Hutchinson and the Protestant emblem-book tradition can nuance our historical understanding of how early modern Protestants understood the relationship between Scripture, nature, and the visual arts. This overlooked tradition of Protestant theological aesthetics also provides a potential model for how theologians, poets, and artists today might bring together theology, the arts, and the study of the natural world as they seek to discern God’s glory and theological truth manifested in the beauty of creation.

Jane Eyre on Film: Translating Spiritual Growth from Novel to Film

Brent Gibson, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

The novel, *Jane Eyre*, has been rightly called a “Christian feminist bildungsroman” (Gallagher 68). As in other bildungsromans, we note the moral, and in *Jane Eyre*’s case, spiritual, growth of the character. Unlike other bildungsromans, however, in this case we see very little account of how this change takes place. The character of *Jane Eyre* at eighteen, her age when the majority of the book takes place, is very different from the *Jane Eyre* of age ten that we meet as the novel opens. What has happened in the intervening eight years to cause such a transformation? The way one answers this question, or whether one even asks it at all, is partially dependent on one’s interpretation of the part that Christianity plays in the narrative. Is it, as Sandra Gilbert concludes, a part of the patriarchal structure that *Jane* ultimately rejects? Or is it the key to understanding not only *Jane*’s transformation, but also some otherwise puzzling decisions that she makes?

Even if one believes, however, that *Jane Eyre*’s faith is essential to her growth, “the actual growth of religious feeling is the one thing the novel takes for granted and does not demonstrate” (Hardy 66). The novel does indeed provide hints of how the transformation takes place, what happened in those almost completely skipped-over eight years. I argue there are three major factors that contribute to *Jane*’s spiritual growth. How prominently the film directors feature these in the story reflects their interpretations of how *Jane*’s transformation has taken place or whether it is even important in the first place. The first two of these factors, *Jane*’s friendship with Helen Burns and the mentorship of Miss Temple, have been noted by critics, but the third factor seems to have been largely unremarked upon. This third factor leading to *Jane*’s spiritual growth is the explicit religious teaching and practice that *Jane* receives at Lowood Institution. As James K.A. Smith notes in his seminal work on Christian education and transformation, *Desiring the Kingdom*, there is “a pedagogy that transforms us as disciples precisely by putting our bodies through a regimen of repeated practices” (33). It is these practices that I wish to highlight in the book, and also to show how these practices are translated to film. Finally, I will connect how the translation of these practices to the *Jane Eyre* films and how a focus or lack thereof on *Jane*’s spiritual growth contributes to the narrative coherence of the films.

Christian Poetics and the “Usable Past”: Acts, Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, and T. S. Eliot’s *Little Gidding*

Harrison Glaze, Rhodes College

It was the American critic Van Wyck Brooks, writing in the periodical, *The Dial*, that would four years later publish T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, who coined the now-famous term “usable past.” Bemoaning the “anarchy,” the “lack of any sense of inherited resources” in which American literature’s self-understanding, as he saw it, was languishing, Brooks called an emerging generation to “the exercise of a little pragmatism”: to raid history’s “inexhaustible storehouse of apt attitudes and adaptable ideals” with the intent “to get a vital order out of the anarchy of the present.” Eliot, “What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish?”, was one of the first to answer that call. He would, in a sense, be developing his answer all his life.

Brooks’ concerns, of course, are particularly (and perhaps his solutions uniquely) American, and early-twentieth-century American at that; but they are also human, civilizational at any rate. And his conception of a “usable past” struck the tenor of, and often gave the terms to, literary and other approaches to history ubiquitous for decades. Eliot invokes something like the notion, with qualification, in his seminal essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent”: “[T]he past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities.”

Christian writers, whether poets or not, have been thinking about and responding to those difficulties and responsibilities for a very long time. The Incarnation unavoidably imbues time and human experience with spiritual consequence; and so these are deeply exigent questions for Christians. (A Christian poetics of history ought perhaps, for that reason, to be chary of the instrumentalism and subjectivism on whose edges Brooks’ argument sometimes teeters at best.) In this paper, I will explore the closing poem of Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, *Little Gidding*, a poem deeply engaged with literary history and with, as its title alone suggests, Christian history, English history, and English Christian history, in the light of two hugely influential predecessors. The first is the Acts of the Apostles, the Church’s own infancy narrative, a text whose example is, for the writer seeking to develop a faithful kind of historical imagination, simply not optional (and whose resonances, see, say, “the glare that is blinding in the early afternoon”, are sometimes unmistakable in *Little Gidding*). The second is Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, relevant both as one of the outstanding medieval Christian histories and for its place in the particular cultural and ecclesial traditions in which Eliot is invested. One text narrates the dawn of Christianity, one the slow, troubled flowering of a Christian culture; Eliot develops under their guidance in *Little Gidding*, as what we might now call a “post-Christian” society emerges, a mature poetic and an historical imagination in which “the communication / Of the dead is tongued with fire,” and, really, because, “history is a pattern / Of timeless moments.”

Contesting (New) Tears: Emerson, Cavell, and the Liquidly Modern Cinematic Landscape

Benjamin Goff, Baylor University

Inspired by Cavell's theorizing on American moral perfectionism in *Contesting Tears, Pursuits of Happiness*, and other works, I'm pursuing the idea that the American concept of the individual self is a major dynamic in the formation of American movies and one of the key axes on which American cinema turns. I'm interested in tracing how the notion of moral perfectionism is undergoing a transformation in the wake of post-modernity, or, what Zygmunt Bauman calls "liquid modernity." This liquid transfiguration is marked by an authenticity-by-any-means-necessary approach, while the communal lamp posts that once guided our steps (family, religion, education, culture, etc) are rapidly fizzling out. Bauman fears that most Westerners do not care to be emancipated from this plight. This new dynamic in contemporary life is precisely what is negotiated in the following examples within American independent films, and so this project becomes an evaluation of public philosophy in crisis.

Just as Cavell drew connections between Emersonian politics and the cinema, I'm also intrigued by the way public cultural notions of self — individual and collective — are negotiated philosophically in the cinema. In this project, I will argue that the dynamics Cavell identified and articulated as constitutive of the American cinema are still operative, but their shortcomings and misunderstandings surrounding them have paired with radically fluid and globalized cultural forces. However, while Cavell focuses mainly on pre-modern cinematic notions, I would put his ideas in conversation with the film-philosophical discourse of the last few decades and chart the challenges and continuities in his assertions.

Frances Ha, specifically our titular character, exhibits many of the ambivalent traits of contemporary moral perfectionism and thus becomes an archetypal example of the white-upper-middle-class-socialite within this dilemma. Standing at the liminal, though distended transition between adolescence and adulthood, the pillars that might historically guide a person in that passage have all but vanished and she is left with nothing but naked, truly isolated ipseity. Within this context, Baumbach's use of the grainy black-and-white that serves as a film-philosophic gesture is not merely cinematic code for nostalgia, but rather an embodied cinematic conversation between the Nouvelle Vague (of which Cavell was wary) and Cavell's own studies of *The Unknown Woman* and their relation to existential truths within their given moment.

The Aesthetics of Religious Trauma

Julie Grandjean, Texas Tech University

Mark Gring, Texas Tech University

This project compares the iconic image of Aylan Kurdi from the European refugee crisis and the religious sculpture of Pieta. Pieta is a common trope in Christian art, and I argue that when it was modeled in the image of the drowned Syrian boy in 2015, it worked on a societal unconscious level and led Europeans to help refugees in their plea by appealing to Christian values of tolerance and charity still present in secular Europe. That particular image filled with religious symbolism did more to change the way Europeans saw refugees than any words or numbers did in the years before, and I argue that it is specifically because of its relation to Christian art and values.

It is also important to point out that both Jesus and Aylan Kurdi belonged to persecuted religious groups, which adds yet another layer of similarities between the sculpture and the photograph. While the visual resemblance is striking, there is also a common religious persecution and trauma to be explored in terms of visuals and art.

Synthetic Awe and Religious Experience: C.S. Lewis's Literary Evocation of The Numinous

Ryan Grube, Editor at Large, An Unexpected Journal

In this presentation I analyze the idea of the numinous as developed by Rudolf Otto and illustrated in the works of C.S. Lewis, beginning with an examination of Otto's impact on Lewis in conjunction with the philosophy of Samuel Alexander. These two thinkers influenced Lewis's eventual return to faith after decades of apostasy, providing him categories and distinctions which could account for the richness and fullness he experienced in the life of the imagination, particularly aesthetic encounters. The integration of imaginative/aesthetic and intellectual/rational realities was important to Lewis, and this reconciliation was something that his adopted worldview of atheistic, rational materialism proved increasingly inadequate to accomplish. Thus after his (re)conversion to Christianity, Lewis took great pains to embed numinous elements in his works of fiction, as he knew first hand the theological potential of such a strategy. To illustrate this, I draw from Lewis's fantasy and science fiction for examples of techniques he deployed which form the basis of his unique literary evangel. Lastly, I broaden the discussion to include the appearance of the numinous across various media, especially in popular culture today, and suggest using Lewis as a model to study and emulate when employing art works as a vehicle for communicating spiritual truth.

Art as *Zakhor*: The Pedagogical Value of Remembrance

Dahlia Guzman, University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley

Art can and does contribute to the development of moral and spiritual perception and sensitivity, specifically as it pertains to large scale events of trauma, violence, and death. In art installations, museums, and memorials, art functions as remembrance, memorial, or tribute. However, it seems that more is needed in order to motivate moral sensitivity.

This paper will offer two preliminary concepts of art as a specific pedagogical tool to inspire and foster individual moral and spiritual perception. The first step in this discussion will be to borrow a concept from Judaism called *zakhor*. * *Zakhor* is a Hebrew word — a verb — meaning “to remember.” Significantly, the imperative to remember implies the imperative of not forgetting. ** *Zakhor* as commandment tasks us with remembrance not merely as historical anecdote, but one step in a practice that makes the past relevant to the present. In doing so, art as *zakhor* might stir us to see our relation to others more fully.

Art as *zakhor* creates a paradoxical conceptual space for the viewer. Remembrance provides the continuity between the viewer and the art subject, and the discontinuity of the time depicted in the art and the viewer’s present. In this way, art can disrupt and unsettle the viewer and open up new aspects of moral perception, thinking and action.

The second step in my approach will be to discuss how particular artistic media can translate that perception into deeper reflection and action. To demonstrate this point, the paper will specifically look at the artwork of German artist Käthe Kollwitz to consider its pedagogical value.

Kollwitz (1867-1945), working with printmaking and sculpture, translated her personal struggles into universal themes of loss, pain and grief. Her works transcend the personal such that they have been used in a variety of arenas including psychology and politics.

Kollwitz’s work can serve as a pedagogical tool in the study of mass violence and genocide. Kollwitz’s works offer the continuity and discontinuity of *zakhor* to stimulate moral sensitivity and action in the individual and the individual’s engagement with the community.

**I have italicized the first appearance of the Hebrew term to highlight it, but throughout my paper, it will not be italicized.*

***Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. Seattle: Palgrave. 1982, p. 5.*

Alberti on Correction, Collection, and Contemplation

Gary Hartenburg, Houston Baptist University

In “On Painting,” Leon Battista Alberti suggests a puzzle about representational art and proposes various solutions to it. Alberti’s solutions are intended to guide painters through difficult cases in which the goals of beauty and fidelity seem to be opposed. Reflection on Alberti’s puzzle and solutions can illuminate ways to dissolve or overcome obstacles to our understanding of the natural, social, and, possibly, supernatural worlds.

According to Alberti, a painter ought to produce works that are both beautiful and faithfully accurate, but what should be done when these ambitions conflict? In some instances, a painter can harmonize the desire to represent accurately and produce beauty, but, of course, there will be times when what the painter wants or needs to represent is less than beautiful.

In such situations, a lesser painter will ignorantly sacrifice representational fidelity for beauty or vice versa, but Alberti thinks there are good reasons to keep hold of both together. On the one hand, a painter who lets go of accuracy will limit the richness of her painting’s historia, weaken the ability of her work to penetrate into both the eye and the mind of the observer, and disrupt the harmony that results from accurately depicting natural motion. On the other hand, a painter who has a limp-wristed hold on beauty will fail to serve both modesty and decency as well as fall short of the highest praise, favor, and approval.

Therefore, since there are good reasons to strive for both goals, Alberti has words of instruction for those who aspire to do so even in circumstances that pull beauty and fidelity apart. This instruction can be summarized under three headings: correct, collect, contemplate. In the first, the painter corrects (or in some cases omits) a “defect of form” in the subject being depicted. In the second, the painter produces a work whose various parts are collected from different aspects of nature (e.g., the face of one person, the torso of another, etc.). In the third, the painter relies on careful and serious contemplation of all the visible details in her subject(s) to reveal to her the creative resolution of a beautiful and accurate representation. Generalizing Alberti’s instructions to correct, collect, and contemplate, let us consider from that vantage the ways in which we inquire into and come to understand the natural, social, and supernatural worlds. In the first, our desire to understand runs up against defects of form that, because they are lacking, require us to correct them, as far as possible, in order to properly understand what they are. Secondly, the technique of collection encourages us to inquire from a number of different starting points into a number of different subject matters without requiring us to have or eventually produce universal theories. Lastly, we should have confidence that diligent, studious, and assiduous attention to nature will guide our inquiries aright and improve our understanding. In all three, we ought to be guided above all by modesty and decency.

The Arts of Reading Scripture: Why Theological Interpretation Needs the Arts

Zen Hess, Baylor University

Theological interpretation has been described by Kevin Vanhoozer as “biblical interpretation toward the knowledge of God.” This statement accurately captures, in general terms, the underlying conviction of the various approaches that are labeled “theological interpretation.” By various means and tools, theological interpretation seeks to *know* God through the work of exegesis and, consequently, to *convey* the knowledge of God to others through exegetical works. Theological interpreters recognize that “knowing God” is not a merely cognitive task, as if “interpretation toward the knowledge of God” meant only accumulating propositions or ideas about God from the text of Scripture. Rather, as Vanhoozer says, “knowing God, like theological interpretation of the Bible itself, is at once an intellectual, imaginative, and spiritual exercise.” In other words, the task of theological interpretation, in so far as it aims toward knowing God, requires theological interpreters to work on the text with intellect, imagination, and spirit. One implication of this is that the neglect of one of these three—intellect, imagination, or spirit—may diminish our own theological interpretations and their capacity to lead others in the pursuit of knowing God through Scripture.

It appears, in fact, that the arts remain largely underexplored as a resource for and medium of the imaginative element of theological interpretation. (The arts here are broadly conceived to include visual, musical, poetic, and performative arts.) Of course, the arts are not the only way one might express imagination in exegetical works, but they are themselves invaluable imaginative engagements with Scripture. Like written theological interpretations, when the artists take biblical stories, themes, or motifs as the subject of their works, they invite people to know God through a more imaginative capacity.

The thesis of my paper might be put this way: theological interpretation needs to engage and employ the arts more substantially in their exegetical works because the arts interpret Scripture toward the knowledge of God in imaginative ways that make possible ways of knowing God that prose struggles, or fails, to do on its own. The first section of this paper attempts to answer the question, “How might the arts enable interpreters to know God in ways that complement customary forms of written exegesis?” The section will not provide a full blown theological-epistemology, but will try to underscore the unique way the arts participate in the experience of human knowledge of God. The second section of the paper grounds the theoretical section in concrete, approachable ways that theological interpreters might engage and employ the arts in their work.

The San Damiano Cross Considered, and Reconsidered

Eric Howell, DaySpring Baptist Church

In 1205, twenty-four year old Francesco Bernardone heard the voice of God call him by name as he prayed alone in a nearly abandoned chapel on the hillside of Assisi, Umbria. The divine voice said, “Francis, rebuild my church.” Francis replied, “Willingly,” and set to work, first by repairing the walls of the small chapel and then, it is said, by rebuilding the whole Church in the love of Christ. The life and legend of St. Francis of Assisi is well known and loved by people of faith all over the world.

Perhaps less well-known is the mysterious cross from which Francis heard the voice of God. The San Damiano cross hangs today over the altar of a small chapel in Basilica di Santa Chiara in Assisi, serving as an invitation to people all over the world drawn to Assisi and the spiritual legacy of Francis and Clare. This is no ordinary cross or crucifix, neither in its depiction of Christ in glory, nor its power to transform through invitation. In this session we will *read* the San Damiano cross as art, as icon, and as invitation. We will consider it from Francis’ point of view as a 13th century Umbrian, and reconsider it from the perspective of life today, asking what role in (re)building the church is provoked in us by the man of Assisi and the cross of Christ that transformed the world through him.

Beauty as an Interruption to Understanding: The Post-Metaphysical Aesthetics of Eberhard Jüngel
Charles Howell, University of St Andrews

The question of the moral influence of beauty and art is deeply rooted in the modern tradition of aesthetics. In theological aesthetics, this question is typically grounded in transcendental reflection, and analyzed with a particular emphasis on the imagination. In these discussions, aesthetic categories, such as beauty, are understood as inherent features of being, which are present in a fragmentary manner throughout creation, but find their perfection in the simplicity of divine being. In that aesthetic categories are grounded in divine simplicity, they possess an intimate relationship with other transcendental features of being, such as goodness. In the most recent discussions, the imagination typically serves as the gateway for perceiving aesthetic categories and in comprehending their rational content, including their relationship to goodness. Beauty is understood here to be of at least equal value to rational concepts. As Richard Viladesau describes it, beauty is “another way of thinking.”

In this paper, I will seek to present an alternative to this framework through the aesthetics of Eberhard Jüngel. Jüngel’s account is distinct in that it is based in the post-metaphysical notion of interruptive events. Here, beauty is neither a quality of being or objectivity, nor a formal feature of human subjectivity (as with the imagination). It is understood as a certain quality of presence, which exerts an interruptive force on the context within which it appears. Jüngel explains that this is a “more primordial” mode of presence that can transform the modes of being present to its eventful happening.

The implications for the relationship between beauty and goodness in such a framework are thus ontologically grounded. Rather than understanding beauty as offering possible rational information or cognitive insight of goodness through a transcendental unity of the two, aesthetic presences influence moral action through an elemental formation of being. As an event, beauty makes goodness possible. It allows for a surplus of moral possibilities as it shapes the ontological features of the entire moral context. In lieu of a transcendental framework, aesthetic categories are theological relevant for Jüngel in that they serve as eschatological previews. The interruptive force of beauty acts in a similar manner to God’s return to the world in glory, upon which the entire framework of worldly existence will be eradicated by the instantiation of a whole new realm of ontological possibilities. Humans receive “eternal life” as they become new beings placed in the context of a “new earth.”

Yet, Jüngel decisively distinguishes between beauty and glory precisely on this eschatological postulation. Beauty is an occurrence within the realm of created being; glory is reserved solely for the event of God’s presence in the fullness of divine being. Beauty’s interruptive nature may point towards God’s return by establishing new possibilities of historical existence, but the conditions in which beauty operate will ultimately be replaced by the eternal possibilities of God’s interruption in glory. As Jüngel explains, in the light of God’s presence “Even the beautiful must die.”

Art, Existentialism, and Hope-filled Fracture

Peder Jothen, St. Olaf College

This presentation will use Christian Existentialists such as Søren Kierkegaard and Paul Tillich to think about the existential relevance of art. In particular, it will argue that through sensual means, creating and engaging with artistic endeavors engages the human imagination and desires in such a way that art both reveals the existential complexities of human existence but also offers a means of identity-making through aesthetic interpretation and creativity.

To make this argument, the presentation will make several moves. One, as Kierkegaard argues, art is a type of indirect communication. Art offers a way of expressing and understanding our human predicament. But rather than using direct, literal means, art relies on a variety of indirect ways. From metaphors to playful stories, art offers a way of communicating that is invitational; rather than telling it asks one interacting with art to enter into its world. As a corollary to this mode of indirectness, Tillich's affirmation of the importance of symbols in speaking and thinking about God and human existence implies that art offers a symbol system that provocatively addresses existential concerns that are beyond simple linguistic explication.

As such, this perspective suggests art arises out of the complexity of being human. For instance, we are both/and creatures, people who are both spiritual and material, finite and infinite, joyful and grieving. To exist as a human thus means accepting both the highs and lows that come with life; indeed, at times, our hopes fracture, what with lived experiences such as pandemics, mid-life crises, perpetual change, and confusions about one's purpose. We yet desire stability amidst such fractures.

As Christians, both Kierkegaard and Tillich understand existential estrangement as well as the hope of experiencing wholeness as being hermeneutically framed through the social imaginary of the Christian narrative. Accordingly, being called into a Christian existence roots an individual within a communal narrative that itself addresses the fracturing of existence. The biblical story of Christ includes stories about death, doubt, and loneliness. From Christ's call to take up one's cross to his sense of forsakenness, God-in-Christ links the divine nature to these very human experiences of fracture that we still embody. Yet, the story is both/and, as the resurrection account along with the transformative power of God's spirit, means that fracture is not the end of the story; God is with us, offering a narrative of hope despite the tomb.

That said, Kierkegaard and Tillich both affirm that literalizing God's being nor fully understanding the mystery of life is possible. But in the creation and interaction with art, we bring the reality of the Christian story alive as we interpret art. No art lies outside of this Christian imaginary, meaning art offers a way of identity formation that affirms the fractured, dualities of our existence, yet finding God's presence within the symbolic cracks in art. We'll think these ideas through particular artworks, both visual and musical.

Imagination as Spiritual Place: What Wendell Berry and the Settlers of the Local Leave Out

L. S. Klatt, Calvin University

Americans have witnessed for the last fifty years an increasing interest in the local: citizens groups exhort us to buy local produce, patronize local businesses, support the local arts scene. This emphasis on the local is in keeping with the mantra so often given to aspiring writers: Write what you know. And "what you know" presumably is what's around you. Take up a foreign subject or set a story in a piece of geography outside of your experience, and you risk coming across as a fraud, a pretender. Try something outlandish or experimental, and your words can seem irrelevant, out-of-touch. One early adopter of this requirement for the writer of faith—perhaps a spokesperson for the "write local" movement—is Wendell Berry. Berry turned away from the New York City literati and back toward his extended family in Port Royal, Kentucky. There in his ancestral home he has cultivated and propagated a literature organic to his tiny corner of the planet. His experience has led him to the conclusion that imagination is best expressed "in place." As he observes in his 2010 collection of essays *Imagination in Place*, "Imagination is a particularizing force, native to the ground underfoot." While I affirm Berry's commitment to the farm country of his forebears and the spiritual implications that follow from it (namely, that literature rooted in the local brings with it a care for—and accountability to—a specific plot of land and the creatures and people who belong to it), I have felt his aesthetic unnecessarily restrictive and incomplete. My paper will explore a dimension essential to literature that Berry seems to disregard. The imagination, though a liminal, mental territory, constitutes a vital place in and of itself where humans, even the homeless and disenfranchised, can put down roots and flourish. Extravagant and unrealistic as it can seem, the imagination expressed in farfetched, figurative language generates an oasis not bound by local circumstances. Imaginative literature need not be regional or local for it to be authentic; not only can the imaginary (the make-believe) materialize dreams, aspirations, and impossibilities, it invites we who are zip-coded and earthbound into another realm altogether, a realm beyond the here and now, that is, the realm of play, which the sociologist Peter Berger associates with the transcendent. When writers and their audiences play with words, they potentially become so caught up in their euphoria that they take leave of this world and time itself is suspended. Berger writes, "Joy is play's intention. When this intention is actually realized... the time structure of the playful universe takes on a very specific quality—namely, it becomes eternity." Works by such authors as Wallace Stevens, A. R. Ammons, Paul Auster, Mary Rueffle, and Crockett Johnson demonstrate that the literature of the possible opens a psychic space where all are free to dwell regardless of locale.

A Gymnasium for the Senses: Aesthetics and Moral Formation in the Epistle to the Hebrews

Evangeline Kozitza Dean, Atlantic School of Theology

The textual starting point for the present paper is Hebrews 5.11-14, and specifically verse 14, where the author indicates a need for his readers' *aisthētēria*, their faculties of perception or sense, to be "trained (*gegymnasmēna*) by constant practice to distinguish between good and evil." This line suggests the context of the ancient gymnasium — a setting for the exercise not only of body, but also of mind and spirit. The labor of intellectual exercise was a crucial facet of ancient concepts of education (*paideia*). Moreover, Hebrews 5.14 attaches a specifically moral purpose — the ability to discern *kalos* from *kakos* — to the formation envisioned for the senses. Through a careful study of the terms used in this text, I argue that the author of Hebrews provides a basis for thinking about the interrelationship between aesthetics, education, and ethics in ancient Christian thought.

Following a close reading of Hebrews 5.14 in context, I propose to widen the exegetical lens in two ways. First, I ask whether the author of Hebrews himself contributes to the formation of his readers' senses by means of his text. I examine several possible examples in which the epistle might be said to appeal particularly to readers' sense perceptions — and even to exercise them. Second, I look at select examples of the reception of Hebrews in the arts, in order to ascertain whether such receptions might contribute to the type of formation of the senses which is envisioned and indeed engendered by the Scriptural text.

The Art of Perception: Ruskinian Aesthetics and the Incarnation

Molly Lewis, Baylor University

This paper explores a few of the theological implications of John Ruskin's aesthetic criticism read in light of Aquinas and Balthasar's writings on beauty. In the nineteenth century, Ruskin argued that the primary way to live well was through the art of perception. And the best way to develop perception was to develop one's skills in art and craft. Making things beautifully is a requirement not just for artists, but for everyone. Ruskin's ideals were motivated by an urgent rejection of the radical changes in industrial Britain. As the world around him grew increasingly mechanized and inhuman, he sought to reclaim a more coherent, holistic, and integrated life. His writing served as a call to action, that action which is also a form of contemplation. Insofar as Ruskin sought a revolution in the way we live, he clearly failed. The world is far more mechanized and inhuman than it was in his day. But his prescription for developing our capacity to see well, in order to pursue and perceive beauty, offers something significant for the Christian seeking to pursue a transformative encounter with Christ today.

Aquinas, after all, argues something quite similar to Ruskin in his call to make rather than to do. Art is subject to the material of its natural forms. Thus, the artist who creates out of the natural world must come to know the natural world more fully in the act of making. Ruskin bases whole treatises on the principle that good art makes right use of its materials, a principle which Aquinas calls simply, "the proportion of a form to its end." Because beauty comes to us through our senses, through the natural world, it serves as a form of knowledge. And beauty is also one of the transcendentals, along with truth, goodness, and oneness. In fact, because it participates in truth, goodness, and oneness, it is in a sense a unification of all of the transcendentals and a characteristic of being itself.

Balthasar draws implications from these principles. When we lose our sense of beauty, he argues, we risk losing the sense of our own transcendental being. Because Christ incarnate is the self-expression of God, whose very being is Beauty, Christ is the most beautiful form in existence. And we, made in the image of God, are uniquely called to recognize that Christological beauty in ourselves. We are not only called to hear the word of truth but to see it. The good news is beautiful. In fact, beauty is ultimately the way in which we know the unknowable God.

Tracing the theological aesthetics of Aquinas and Balthasar clearly resonates with Ruskin's dictum that we all ought to seek to perceive beauty and create beautifully in response to the world that we are given. Ruskin's call is not simply a reactionary response to industrial dehumanization, but a response to our human nature, made in the image of God, designed to know and love him through the very art of perception.

Dealing with the Unfathomable: Hester Pulter Rewriting Job

LaJoie Lex, Baylor University

In Job's final answer to the Lord, he repents for speaking of things he did not understand:

"I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.
Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not;
things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.
Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.
Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes"

(Job 42:1-6, KJV).

Job's response to recognizing his deficiency in understanding is repentance. These final words we hear from Job echo through much of the works of a 17th century poet named Hester Pulter. Repenting or "rolling" in "dust and ashes" is mentioned in many of her poems, and she also appears hesitant to speak of things that are "too wonderful" for her. She instead uses her poetry as "repentant tears," and, like Job, waits for an ending to the story she cannot yet fathom.

Hester Pulter was a wife, mother, and unpublished author. Of the 15 children she bore, only 2 outlived their mother. Pulter's manuscript of lyric poetry, rediscovered in the 1990s, gives us intimate insight into depression, bereavement, and other difficulties of her life. Because she did not intend to publish her writing, she is able to be more candid than more public female authors may have been at the time.

While scholars have tended to look at the influence of the Psalms on Pulter's writing, my dissertation chapter on her poetry argues that she is more influenced by Job. Unlike Job, Pulter holds a hope for an afterlife. However, Pulter does not know how the afterlife will work or what it will look like, so she tends to keep her focus on the observable part: Dust and ashes. In so doing, she is able to trust God with what is beyond her understanding (resurrection and afterlife) while finding hope in the processes she can observe (death, dissolution, and dust). Because of this, her declaration near the end of her poems that God "Will raise me unto life. I know not how" is a triumph of faith over doubt. Rather than just imitating Job, she is rewriting his struggle with God and with his unknowable ending into one that looks to an unknowable (but certain) afterlife. The patterns of Job's conversations with God echo in Pulter's poetry and present a pattern for how expression of grief through art can confront and make peace with the unfathomable.

In thinking about the deaths of herself and her children, Pulter engages with both scientific and theological debates about the fate of souls, matter, and the universe. Unknowability is not something she can simply dismiss. However, she is able to find hope and faith even through these gaps in her understanding. Although unable to see clearly beyond the veil of dissolution she so frequently imagines, she knows she was made to "sing." She knows that her art has an eternal purpose, and her pouring out of grief in earthly poems is a beginning, a tuning, a practice, a rehearsal for the songs of praise she will sing in the afterlife. Her songs, like her life, will be continued. Pulter's poetry shows us how art can help us cope with both our grief and with a hope we cannot yet understand.

The Creative Practice as a Habitus of Love: How Making Art Can Help Spiritual Formation

Gregory Lookerse, Hope College

Over the past decade I have taught art at nine schools. I am becoming increasingly troubled by many statements of ignorance I hear weekly but there is one in particular I will address; “art is of form of self expression.”

I have seen many students trapped by the supposed freedom of this view because it holds a key problem that is unfortunately true of most 18-22 year olds. What if one does not have much to express? What if one is not an interesting person, either in fact or by dint of biased perceptions? The utility of this view of the creative process allows students to dodge critical feedback because it rests upon the idea that art is subjective and the artist is authoritative.

I think there is artwork that is an expression of the creator’s self, but most of it is of poor quality and when it is great it has a different sort of origin. Artworks are not made via a process that involves the following steps:

- Define the self.
- Develop a unique voice.
- Hone skills and craft.
- Execute a unique masterpiece that is a well crafted, uniquely voiced and individual expression of the self.

This is a process of design. It is the process for creating propaganda. The origin of the greatest artworks of self expression is usually an incredibly open, humble and observant artist who is listening rather than exerting. This is evidenced by the writings of Madeliene L’Engel, Dorothy Sayers, Flannery O’Connor, William Kentridge, Edvard Munch, and of course Vincent Van Gogh. Following the work of Kenneth Steinbeck in his book *Creative Practices*, the creative process will be broken down into a few general steps in order to demonstrate how love, as defined in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, can be modeled by the artist. As Daneil Seidell writes, learning to make art is, “...the acquisition of a habitus, a way of life, a general disposition toward the world as an artist...”

A studio practice is most powerful and effective when it is driven by a humble love. That is to say, in order for the artist to humbly observe what happens in the studio they must lovingly approach their creative process.

As the artist loves God, people and the world they are confronted by the realities of the materials in their studio, whatever that may be. This practice may reveal an expression of the self but it will most likely reveal much more.

The creative process founded on love will develop the artists ability to love.

“Restless and Longing”: The Artistic Fragments of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Imprisonment

Devin Maddox, B&H Publishing Group

Taylor Worley, Wheaton College

If commentators address the creative output of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's prison years at all, it is often framed as significant only as a window into something else more important—pitting the disciplines of history, theology, and art against one another. For example, Clifford Green interprets Bonhoeffer's play and novel for its theological relevance. Bonhoeffer's niece Renate Bethge attends to the fragmentary corpus for its autobiographical significance. Hardly anyone appreciates Bonhoeffer's artistic production simply as creative expression.

In addition to his vocation as theologian, Bonhoeffer was a musician, a poet, a playwright, and a novelist, but this side of Bonhoeffer has been given less attention than his intellectual character. Even speaking in terms of “sides” gives the false impression that they can be divided (Bonhoeffer's own life bears witness against this!). Every person is all “sides” at once. The prisoner himself reflects in his most famous poem from that time: “Am I then really that which other men tell of?/ Or am I only what I myself know of myself?/ Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage.... Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.” Hence, a perspective on Bonhoeffer that considers his creative production gives a fuller picture, though, of a theologian that contained multitudes.

This paper argues that Bonhoeffer's creative expression bears significance as art and illuminates the anthropological dimension of Bonhoeffer's creativity. Perhaps Bonhoeffer's artistic skills were underdeveloped, and his situation rendered his efforts critically inadequate. But it bears consideration on what it says about Bonhoeffer as a person, and consequently his witness more generally, that under extreme suffering he spent his scarce time creating, not only theological work, but surprisingly, works of art as well. This consideration should not diminish the significance of Bonhoeffer's theological reflections from the prison years. Instead, the art produced by him in that final chapter of his life might cause the interpreter to wonder, “What role does art play in the midst of profound suffering?” Or as the poet Seamus Heaney said, “How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea?” Bonhoeffer's example may, in fact, serve to demonstrate that not even the darkest circumstances could obscure the shining light of God's creative image in us.

Landscape Painting as an Aid to Spiritual Perception: Caspar David Friedrich's Cross in the Mountains (Tetschen Altar)

Kaia Magnusen, The University of Tampa

In 1808, Caspar David Friedrich painted his revolutionary work, *Cross in the Mountains (Tetschen Altar)*. This work, which was intended for devotional use as an altarpiece, neither depicts a specific religious scene nor includes any actual human figures. Instead, the work portrays a manmade summit cross atop a mountain peak. Fir trees surround the cross, which is illuminated by the last rays of the setting sun. The painting is enclosed within a gilded frame, featuring carved symbolic elements, which was designed by the artist himself. Despite the work's striking appearance, the lack of actual human figures and the use of landscape to convey religious meaning was controversial at the time, and the criticism he received prompted Friedrich to write and publish his first and only public explanation of the symbolism in one of his works. In this painting, Friedrich attempted to reveal spiritual truth through the use of natural elements. At that time, it was unprecedented to use landscape to convey sacred meaning in a devotional painting. Rather than playing a supporting role or functioning as a backdrop for a human narrative, in *Cross in the Mountains*, the landscape is the primary signifier of meaning. This work was intended as an altarpiece, which makes the artist's choice of using a landscape rather than human biblical figures to communicate religious significance especially groundbreaking. His decision to omit human figures and, instead, imbue the landscape with religious significance flouted conventions of traditional religious painting. However, the distinct religious symbolism of both the painting and the images carved into the frame reference established religious symbols that, when interpreted, reveal that landscape art can, indeed, function as an aid to spiritual perception. The glory and power of God are suggested by Friedrich's rendering of the natural landscape, which alludes to the general revelation of God through nature. The wooden cross with a metal image of Christ obviously references Christ's crucifixion. This clear Christian symbol is associated with special revelation in Scripture. This combination of elements functions as a bridge between general and special revelation. Friedrich's *Tetschen Altar (Cross in the Mountains)* demonstrates that the natural world reflects the glory of God and can be used to convey profound religious truth via symbolic means. His decision to use natural elements in an everyday landscape setting in a religious work of art suggests that narrative, figural scenes are not always necessary to communicate essential truths of the Christian faith and can inspire as much religious contemplation and convey as much spiritual insight as more conventional religious paintings.

Anne Sexton and the Journey Toward God

William Marsh, North Central Michigan College

Historically, art has been one of the richest human venues for contemplating and expressing the idea of God. We see this clearly in the poetry of Anne Sexton, particularly in her collection titled "The Awful Rowing Toward God." Here, Sexton writes at length about her struggles to believe in God in light of the powerlessness of her worldly transience and what she perceives to be the unyielding fact of divine sovereignty. This paper proposes to use the poems in this collection as another way to analyze and examine the perennial human effort to balance trust in God with his often fearsome sovereignty.

Although Sexton laments in "The Rowing Endeth," "He [God] wins because He holds five aces," she notes that humans continue to pursue God. As she observes in "The God-monger," even as she sought answers to all her "nihilistic questions," she dug deep "underground, past the stones . . . past the roots . . . and went in search of some animal of wisdom." And although in the guise of a "mouse with trees growing out of his belly," she found it, his answers, "Water. Beer. Food.," do not satisfy. We cannot let God go.

Even if God remains an opaque vision. In "When Man Enters Woman," Sexton writes that, "This man, this woman with their double hunger, have tried to reach through the curtain of God and briefly they have, though God in his perversity unties the knot." Easily found yet exceedingly costly to sustain, trusting in God only leads us into more questions. As she notes in "Row-ing," "God [being] there like an island I had not rowed to, still ignorant of Him, my arms and my legs worked, and I grew, I grew . . . and now, in my middle age, about nineteen in the head, I'd say, "I am rowing, I am rowing."

Yet God must be there, and he must be true. "Oh angels," Sexton writes in "Frenzy," "keep the windows open so that I may reach in and steal each object, objects that tell me . . . that the Christ who walked for me, walked on true ground." Like many people, Sexton realizes what she needs, yet her frustration and angst prevent her from seeing it in full.

In Anne Sexton's poetry, we see the dilemma of every human being. We want to know God, but we want to know him on our own terms. Sexton's poignant lines aptly convey the quixotic human attempt to grasp God without acknowledging his divine sovereignty over all things. Her words leave readers vagabonds and wanderers, sentenced to troll the shores of an ocean that, apart from them embracing saving faith in Christ, they will never be able to cross.

A Theological Reflection on *Stranger Things* as Response to Trauma

Andy McCoy, Hope College

Contemporary theorists and clinicians regularly describe art of all kinds as meaningful for expressing the pain and suffering of trauma. Many also propose that art can be helpful in the process of healing from trauma in the past or in growing resilience in the face of present trauma. I will examine how the most recent fourth season of Netflix's *Stranger Things* provides a fascinating context for examining art's relationship to trauma and even for thinking about how art can provide a context for the experience of increased trauma healing and resilience.

In *Stranger Things 4*, teenage protagonist Eleven and her band of intrepid friends confront perhaps their darkest threat to date: the evil being Vecna and the curse with which he tortures and ultimately executes his victims. Vecna's curse begins with the apparition of a ticking grandfather clock which alerts victims to an inescapable doom of reliving the trauma of their worst experiences until Vecna himself arrives to kill them by disfiguring and crushing their bodies with the power of his mind. I will argue that both Vecna and his curse are a kind of metaphor for trauma itself, specifically in relation to time; trauma is often experienced as a kind of "collapse" of time in which sufferers experience feeling "stuck" in traumatic events from the past and so ever struggle to heal in the present. This inability to move in time towards resilience and healing from trauma has a distorting and disfiguring effect on all aspects of human life.

No one in *Stranger Things 4* survives Vecna's curse until the character Max escapes (in the fourth episode) through her friends' use of music to disempower Vecna's mind control and bring Max back into awareness of herself and her relationship with her friends. I will discuss this episode as an example of music's power to respond to trauma, specifically by creating connections between Max, her experience of herself, and her relationships which do not literally collapse into Vecna's destruction of time through trauma. Music is particularly presented here as a powerful tool in helping counter trauma's harmful effects on the human experience of time.

I will finally explore how art and music's response to trauma is further enriched by a Christian understanding of time as eschatological. If the redeeming work of Christ responds to all past, present, and future manifestations of sin and evil, then Christian understanding of time is one which already expands in relationship to human life and flourishing. In this way, Christian faith finds much accord with art and music in response to trauma.

“Sweeter Than Honey”: Songwriters’ Perspectives on Singing Scripture

Jill McFadden, Regent College

Peter La Grand, Regent College

Ben Keyes, L’Abri Fellowship

Jonathan Edwards contended that music both expresses and excites our affections, our spiritual sensibilities. Singing to God can give voice to the love we already have for God. And, it can move us in such away that it excites that love even more. It does not only express our devotion but can cause our devotion to increase.

Israel since its inception has sung its worship. And now millennia later, Christian artists take up that same songbook, the Psalms, and put it to ever new tunes and paraphrases. This book of Hebrew poetry is surely the epitome of generative art! In setting scripture to ever more and ever new tunes, artists have offered the psalter afresh to every generation.

The band of which I am a part, the folk trio Ordinary Time, has recorded many hymns and written many of our own settings of scripture, including many from the Psalter. (See a setting of Psalm 139 at <https://youtu.be/fYyO5gkzFpc>)

We met in seminary at Regent College where we all have master’s degrees in Theology and the Arts. We’ve played together for over 15 years, and have travelled to conferences where we’ve offered a concert, led worship, and led lecture-style breakout sessions on both lament in the life of faith, and the Christian Imagination (in various combinations). Peter La Grand is a trained psychotherapist and former social worker and pastor living in Vancouver. Ben Keyes directs the Boston branch of L’Abri Fellowship. Jill has worked as a worship arts director and is married to a church planter, living in Baltimore, currently raising four kids. Our lives and professional experience and church backgrounds vary greatly, and we each approach songwriting and scripture setting differently, yet with similar theological training.

To Break the Heart Whole: On Music, Longing, and Worship (A Practitioner's Experience)

Jill McFadden, St. Moses Church

Our society is fast-paced, productivity-oriented, and digitally-distracted. It is easy to walk through a day or a week without much reflection and without much connection to our own interior world. Unless one is actively pushing against this noisy rush of activity and information overload, it is easy not to notice longings within us. What are our deepest desires, hurts, and hopes? For some, this is by design - it is preferable not to address the longing within. For others, the heart neglect is unintentional. In her recently published book *Bittersweet: How Sorrow and Longing Make Us Whole*, Susan Cain contends that acknowledging our longings (particularly the sadder ones) is a vital step toward our own personal wholeness and necessary in connecting us to each other. And beauty - including the beauty of art - can facilitate that acknowledgement. Art (and for her music is especially potent) can move us toward self-understanding, its beauty exposing and encouraging us to long (literally, to make ourselves longer or to stretch ourselves out toward) for what we desire but do not have - or, for the permanence of the beautiful things and joys we do have but are fleeting.

This presentation will dialogue with Cain's book *Bittersweet*, presenting a uniquely Christian understanding of longing. Through musical examples (live and recorded) and biographical anecdotes, it will explore music's potential both for exposing our longings and for training our hearts to long for the right things. It will probe possible ways that pastors and church musicians can responsibly lean into this epistemological function of music during times of corporate worship, as music helps us better to know ourselves, our longings, and ultimately the God in whom our longings are fulfilled.

Hear in Alabama: Seeking Understanding through the Art of Podcasting

Beth McGinnis, Samford University

Podcasting has exploded over the past five years. *Insider Intelligence* projects 424 million podcast listeners worldwide in 2022, accounting for twenty percent of internet users and amounting to a ninety-four-billion-dollar industry by 2028. Podcasting can be more than a trendy and lucrative platform, though. It can be an art form. In fact, podcasting seems tailor-made for Art-Based Research in musicology. Field recordings and oral-history interviews can be combined, arranged, and composed musically. Podcasters can harness the popularity of the medium to reach wider audiences and work toward the social change that is often the goal of Art-Based Research.

How can Art-Based Research lead to social change? Art helps us learn to see as God sees, to engage individuals and communities not as generalized stereotypes but as human, uniquely created and uniquely loved. As Frederick Buechner wrote, “If we are to love our neighbors, before doing anything else we must see our neighbors.” One way to see better is to hear better.

The podcast *Hear in Alabama* (www.hearinalabama.com) is rooted in partnerships I have built with majority-Black communities in Perry County, Alabama, part of Alabama’s Black Belt and one of the poorest counties in the country. Marion, the county seat, was the original home of Samford University prior to its relocation to Birmingham in the late nineteenth century. Churches, universities, and other organizations do good work in Perry County, but often focus on what the communities lack rather than the richness they hold.

In the classroom and through Community-Based Learning, I have introduced Samford students to the music of Alabama’s Black Belt. These musical cultures are strong, rich, and vibrant, and students respond strongly to them. Written student reflections have revealed the profound benefits of these encounters: increasing respect and compassion across cultural borders, sharper critical thinking about cultural difference and identity formation, maturing perspectives on musical style, and emergence of common identity across cultural borders.

Hear in Alabama attempts to bring these same benefits to a wider audience. The podcast has featured African diasporic music from Alabama and Brazil, the call-and-response traditions of Black southern churches, and Birmingham-based musicians during the Civil Rights era. Forthcoming episodes will highlight the Poarch Creek Indians in Atmore, Alabama. These are rich musical cultures, but musicological knowledge is not the main goal. *Hear in Alabama* seeks primarily to build compassion and respect across cultural groups. As listeners eavesdrop on conversations with people they would otherwise have no chance to hear, they learn as much from tone of voice and turn of phrase as they do from the histories of these Alabama communities. In this way *Hear in Alabama* seeks to build understanding, respect, and love among our Alabama neighbors and in the wider world.

A Song of Healing: Therapeutic Renewal and Christological Participation in *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask*

Evyn McGraw, Independent Scholar

This paper argues for the therapeutic and spiritually transformative potential of video games by examining *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask* as a case study. It first outlines how the participatory nature of video games might be psychologically valuable by allowing players to mimetically enact narratives of cosmic renewal and thereby experience their own emotional renewal. The paper illustrates ways in which *Majora's Mask* fulfills this therapeutic potential by presenting the protagonist, Link, as a redemptive figure capable of healing the grief of a suffering world. However, through the game's cyclic repetition of time, in which the player's progress in healing the world is repetitively undone, the game also problematizes narratives of cosmic renewal and instead suggests a nihilistic vision of reality, one in which the world cannot be permanently healed and the prospect of death is ever-looming. Drawing an analogy between the game's ostensible nihilism and Eleonore Stump's psychology of evil, however, the paper then illustrates how the game's nihilism is ultimately overcome through Christological parallels of kenotic love. As Christ experienced absolute despair in his cry of dereliction, which enabled him to then be present with the despair of humanity, even in the midst of great evil, so too does the game's interactive experience of futility enable the player to empathize with others in despair, which results in the game's redemptive conclusion. Thus, through gameplay, players participate in Link's self-emptying love in the face of hopelessness, which affords the player an analogical experience of Christ. On a narrative level, the game offers hope through despair because it presents a story in which the loneliness of evil is abolished through empathy and shared suffering. The paper concludes, however, that the true power of *Majora's Mask* lies not in its mere *depiction* of empathy but in the way it initiates players into a participatory experience of self-emptying love. In other words, the game brings healing through a kind of Christological participation that opens players up to the possibility of an encounter with divine presence.

Art, Theodicy, and the End of Suffering

David McNutt, Wheaton College

How might art enable us to understand and respond to human suffering? How might our theology of the arts both be informed by our suffering and help to inform a theological response to humanity's suffering? This paper will explore the multivalent relationship between art and the perennial theological challenge of evil and suffering in order to explore how art might enable our search for understanding in the face of our suffering.

Standing as we do in between the Christian affirmations of the goodness yet fallenness of creation and the fulfillment of God's promised new creation, we must grapple with the reality of suffering and evil in this world. Of course, many theological and philosophical responses have been offered in an attempt to answer the problem of evil and suffering. As a fundamental human endeavor, art can enable us to understand this dilemma better in multiple ways:

1. Art expresses humanity's suffering. Art is not free from the realities of sin and suffering, but rather exists within the same created world that requires redemption and awaits new creation. One of the most important functions of art is its ability, like the biblical laments, to reveal the truth and depths of human suffering.
2. Art relieves humanity's suffering. Many philosophers and theologians (e.g., Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Berdyaev) have suggested that art can, in some way, relieve our suffering, even if only temporarily or only to a degree. While ultimate salvation from suffering is only possible through the person and work of Jesus Christ, the arts can provide a limited yet significant balm in the midst of our suffering.
3. Art contributes to humanity's suffering. As part of our consideration of this theme, we must also acknowledge and grapple with the fact that art might actually contribute to human suffering. Our participation in the arts is fraught with both the potential for and the reality of the corruption of the arts that can result in abuse, evil, and suffering.
4. Art points to Christ's redemptive suffering. Perhaps the most significant action related to art is its capacity to point to God's response to our suffering through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
5. Art anticipates the end of our suffering. As we await the eschatological fulfillment of God's promised new creation, art can provide us with glimpses and foreshadows of the redemption of creation and the restoration of all things through Christ.

At each point, I will offer specific examples of works of art that can enable understanding in these ways. Although art cannot ultimately end human suffering, it can help us to understand the reality of our suffering, and it points to and anticipates the end of our suffering through the redemptive suffering of Jesus Christ.

“My Feet Cry Out, But My Soul Is Singing”: The Messiah University Concert Choir’s Musical Pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago

with video choral performance footage
Joy Meade, Messiah University

Christian pilgrimage and choral music performance are both what Celtic spirituality might label “thin places” — moments of holiness where the barrier between heaven and earth feels particularly minimal. This paper explores the intersection of pilgrimage and choral music in an experiential way, by chronicling the inspiring journey of the Messiah University Concert Choir hiking and performing along the Camino de Santiago, a medieval Christian pilgrimage route to the tomb of St. James across northern Spain. While pilgrimage has been an essential faith formation requisite for many Catholics, Jews and Muslims, modern evangelical college students and faculty are more often exposed to mission trips and service projects as part of Christian higher education’s emphasis on service-learning. This paper argues the merit of pilgrimage and choral music as valuable sources of Christian faith development.

The practice of pilgrimage and choral music together led Messiah students to a deeper understanding of God, the church and humanity in several ways. First, by singing music composed for medieval pilgrims and in twelve different languages, Messiah students connected to ancient worship traditions from around the world and thus increased their appreciation of the unity and diversity within the global church. Secondly, Messiah students related the physical challenge of walking 120km on blistered feet to other historical walking movements by singing music from American slavery, the underground railroad and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Students’ empathy for the physical hardship of more contemporary American injustices grew even while in Spain. Performing public concerts each evening challenged students to persevere through exhaustion, endure pain, remain mentally tough, and rely on God and their fellow choristers as a source of strength.

Lastly, and perhaps most formative of all, was the sense of community developed between the students and the other pilgrims en route — in this liminal state, choral music renewed the souls of hundreds of weary pilgrims who listened, gave everyone a glimpse of the divine, and connected strangers to one another through the shared experience of pilgrimage and music.

Through performance video footage, student and faculty interviews, photographs and narration, this paper and presentation will demonstrate how Messiah students sang and walked their theology and more deeply discovered how the beauty of creation, community and choral music are gifts to better understand and connect with God.

Literary Nonfiction, the Gift of True Rhetoric and True Art

Matt Miller, College of the Ozarks

Creative or literary nonfiction can seem to pose both an aesthetic and a theological problem. From an aesthetic point of view, the genre risks compromising beauty with advocacy, undermining the pursuit of beauty with a rhetorical project that instrumentalizes beauty and subordinates it to something like a partisan project. From a theological point of view, literary nonfiction might seem to adorn the simple truth with an artfulness that can seem like little more than deceit. What role, then, does literary nonfiction play in a vision of literature seeking truth, goodness, and beauty?

I will argue that literary nonfiction can be both rhetorical and artful, pursuing beauty and truth even as it advances a purpose or agenda. Drawing upon rhetorical theory by thinkers like Jim Corder and Mari Lee Mifsud, I will argue that the rhetorical projects of literary nonfiction can be understood as form of rhetoric that undermines the instrumentality and brutal efficiency we usually associate with the term "rhetoric."

This non-instrumental quality allows literary nonfiction to operate in the realm of the gift (grace), which Lewis Hyde has argued is the domain of art. Accordingly, literary nonfiction can be fully rhetorical while also fully pursuing beauty and truth. The genre can thus be a vital form for putting back together forms of knowledge that have been fragmented in the modern university, bridging the *trivium*, *quadrivium*, and the mechanical arts.

Go Ahead and Haunt Me: Music and Spiritual Formation

Joy Moore, Union University

Art often works on us pre-cognitively, shaping us unaware and forming our perceptions and beliefs about the world, ourselves, others, and reality. In doing so, it tends to address us first through our imagination and senses such that we can be taken or shaken by an artwork before our logical minds have found their bearings. How can art shape us so elementally? In what particular ways does it affect one's sense of the complexity of the human experience? And how does this influence one's understanding of faith and of God? This paper will offer several ways art forms one's perception and orientation to the world, drawing upon my own upbringing within a musical home, an environment that, as a child, I received uncritically and responded to naturally, long before retrospection illuminated music's subtler powers.

I intend to explore three primary capacities of music, interweaving their effects on one's spiritual formation: music's capacity to insinuate patterns of familiarity and estrangement, to invite one's conformity and individuality, and to reveal the abundant and diverse nature of reality.

Iris Murdoch and the Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry
Scott Moore, Baylor University

TBD

What Pretty Costumes: The challenge of costuming as a transformative artform

Sarah Mosher, Baylor University

My professional life has been in the world of costuming both in the performing arts, and in the private client worlds, and people will often remark to me when they discover what I do, “That must be so Fun!”, or “Have you watched Bridgerton yet? I love the costumes!” While I do absolutely enjoy my vocation, this aspect is only the sprinkles on top of a beautifully iced, intricately flavored cake. The work that costumes and accessories perform in the process of telling human stories, transformational stories that point to aspects of the lived experiences we share, and lived experiences that help us to expand our empathetic sensibilities is more profound and more carefully considered than most people realize. The art of what I do is about pulling from a vast array of understanding, asking questions that are difficult and finding ways to connect humans to each other and to the characters, for my creative collaborators and for the audience. The work involves challenging myself and others to dig deeper, to explore human motivations, relationships, emotions, and the ways in which we relate to the divine. While the audience may consciously experience a fraction of this, the unconscious wrestling that many pieces of artful performance can bring about is indeed influenced by the aesthetic intentionality of creatives who have dug deep through the process and understand the ways in which their work will spark questions in the audience. I will show examples of the ways in which this has been enacted, taking the conference audience behind the curtain using imagery and form to see the context and nuance of costume design and how it stands as an artform that can engage audiences in their virtue development, and empathetic growth.

Enfolding the Knot

Fiber Art Wall Hanging

Sarah Mosher, Baylor University

Originally created as a piece to be presented in “Art as Worship”, a gallery show that explores the ways in which the act of creating art is an act of worship, and the act of viewing and contemplating the artistic artifact can also serve as a form of worship, this Fiber Art piece explores the process of healing.

Artist Statement:

The interconnection between psychology and physiology has always been of interest to me, as someone who designs costumes to put onto bodies, I often think about the experience a performer has when they're wearing something, and how that item interacts with their own sense of the world. I am also constantly questioning how clothing can be created in better and slower ways, ways that acknowledge the presence of the earth. This has led me to an interest in weaving, as well as in learning about and creating bioplastics. To me, the disruption that trauma can have on our natural physiological systems has parallels with the ways in which human intervention has caused disruption to environmental systems, and in both cases, the healing process cannot hope to eliminate the trauma, but rather enfold it and make use of it, acknowledging and softening the hard edges. This piece explores my current meditations on the process of enfolding the trauma and the imperfect beauty of the healing process.

Priming Effect of Church Architecture: An Exploration into the Relationship between Church Design and Belief Plausibility Structures

Matthew Niermann, California Baptist University

INTRODUCTION:

In the United States of America, Evangelical Protestantism has a major influence on religious practice in America — including an influence on religious building trends. Stemming from the historical missiological theory known as Church growth Theory, Evangelical Protestant church designers developed what is known as ‘architectural evangelism’; a building style that sought to remove barriers for the unchurched by utilizing secular building typologies as the basis for church design.

The adoption of architectural evangelism is motivated by an evangelistic impulse to ease the unchurched from non-belief to belief. Yet the practitioners of this approach are primarily focused on local contexts, without consideration of the potential effects on the larger societal perceptions, plausibility, or belief structures - sometimes referred to as the ‘sacred canopy’. As sociologist Peter Berger observes, religious practice participates in a dialectic process of world shaping which includes a process of the externalization of religious beliefs, which is then objectified for all, followed by individual internalization of these beliefs. With this observation, the question is raised as to how the lack of recognizable externalization of religious belief via architecture could affect, or possibly hinder, the eventual internalization of beliefs.

RESEARCH METHOD:

To explore this question, this research project utilizes quantitative research methods to explore whether exposure to varying church architecture, namely architectural evangelism church design and traditional protestant church design, effects the belief plausibility structures of Christianity in America. Specifically, this research utilizes the understanding of decision heuristics and in particular the understanding of how the priming effect can alter our decision-making. The priming effect is a psychological observation whereby individuals’ exposure to a stimulus influences a response to a second stimulus. Ultimately, this research study examines 1) whether church architecture has a priming effect on individual’s perception of the current standing of Christianity in America (e.g., self-identification, worship participation, growth or decline) and 2) whether architectural evangelism driven designs vs. prototypical ecclesial designs vary in their priming effect.

The research study included 200 participants demographically divided equally by gender and church participation; evenly distributed between seven age brackets ranging from 18 to 79; and evenly drawn from six major geographic regions in the United States. Participants watched a 30-second video filmed from the inside of a car driving down a street. Three variants of the video were randomly assigned to participants 1) video passing recognizable church structures; 2) video passing non-recognizable church structures (i.e., architectural evangelism churches); 3) video passing commercial buildings. Following, individuals were asked five questions about their perception of the status of Christianity in America, including their perception of the plausibility of the Christian faith.

OUTCOMES:

Statistical analysis of the data explored the occurrence of priming effects related to the variant exposures. Results found statistically significant variation in reported perceptions of the status of Christianity based on the variant video exposures, and no statistically significant variation based on gender, church attendance, age, or geographic region. Notably participants exposed to the video of recognizable church structures, responded to the questions with higher rates perceived status (self-identification, worship participation, growth or decline) of Christianity in America.

Conclusions from this study indicate that church architecture may hold a priming effect on individual perception of the status of Christianity in America — thus suggesting that recognizable ecclesial forms may support religious belief plausibility structures at the societal level. Therefore, the practice of utilizing secular typologies for church architecture advocated by architectural evangelism may ultimately be undercutting belief plausibility structures for unchurched — effectively inhibiting their path to belief.

Literary and Visual Contamination in Medieval and Early Modern Depictions of the Slaughter of the Innocents

Daniel Nodes, Baylor University

This study examines instances of literary contamination in poetry and art, especially in manuscript illustrations and sculpture depicting biblical narratives. A basic definition of contamination in literature is “a blending of legends or stories that results in new combinations of incident or in modifications of plot.” Similarly, for the visual arts on biblical subjects, contamination is the assembly of characters or actions from various parts of Scripture into the same visual narrative. Contamination was a useful tool for medieval poets to develop narrative plots but especially to reinforce spiritual lessons. As an example, a sixteenth-century school play *Samaritanes* by the Flemish writer Peter Papeus, has the Samaritan not merely come upon the beaten traveler from Jerusalem as in the account in Luke; in Papeus the Samaritan is, as it were, actively in the rescue business, keeping watch for all wayward travelers and even ordering the innkeeper to go out to the road to force those in need of help to come in. This version of the Good Samaritan is here ‘contaminated’ by the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-23), reinforcing the lesson of the Redeemer’s unconditional readiness to save all those in mortal need of rescue.

Patristic and medieval commentators readily accepted the compatibility of diverse scriptural narratives and often made use of the elements in one parable or scriptural narrative to elucidate elements in another scripture text with the purpose of constructing a strong, harmonious lesson. They did this with some risk and were sometimes accused of a form of heresy in composing a confused mixture of individual elements not intended for the context they are forced in, risking an alien doctrine.

Yet for the most part such contamination was on firm theological ground. In a long-standing debate over the unity and diversity of the Scriptures, especially the nature of the language of the Bible and the meaning of words, it was often emphasized that the words of the Bible are neither equivocal, with separate meanings in different contexts, nor univocal, meaning precisely the same thing everywhere. The general sense is that scriptural language signifies at least analogically (e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, prima pars, Q 13.5.7 and 1.13.6). The analogical nature of the words leads then to a univocal message that allows for stories to be blended intertextually. Various individual stories of Scripture express a unified metanarrative describing a single saving plan. A major means to exploit the transferability of scriptural narrative is by the literary device of contamination.

The presentation focuses on contamination of depictions of the story of the Slaughter of the Innocents from Matthew, with elements from Logos-Word descriptions found in John the Evangelist. Depictions of the Good Samaritan blended with elements from the Prodigal Son will also be considered. The presentation gives the history of the contamination of those narratives, distinguishes contamination from simple juxtaposition and typology, and explains the artists’ exploration of the theological meaning of the events through contamination. Literary and graphic texts from Late Antiquity to the 17th century will be shown and explained.

Portraiture and the Imago Dei

Exhibition of Portraits along with stories, discussion of process and short reflection/paper

Sean Oswald, Fine Arts Teacher and Artist, Live Oak Classical School

I would like to propose an exhibition of several recent portraits with a short reflection on how the image of God is related to portraiture and provides a justification for the act of creating portraits. In this exhibition, I would like to focus on my process as an artist and discuss the examples of my portraiture work and the people portrayed, telling stories about them and the insights I've gained through the process of creating them. Further I would like to expand on how the relationship between the imago dei and portraiture could be one solution for promoting the dignity of persons in contemporary art. This has implications also for the importance of teaching portraiture whether in drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, or other mediums as an enduring artistic practice. Furthermore this approach to creating portraits is a deeply reflective and perceptual practice.

With respect to my specific portraits, I would like to explain my process and how I think it is an embodied form that models the ideas of the imago dei, offers dignity to the sitter, and draws out moments of authenticity, which further reflect the imprint of God on specific persons. My portraits are usually worked up in the studio after a session of several hours sitting with the model, drawing and sketching them and taking many photos. The sittings start with small sketches and several larger ones to get a feel for the person. After long observation and a mix of extended conversation that ebbs and flows between casual and intense interaction, there usually comes a point when the sitter stops being self-conscious and settles into themselves. It is this moment of naturalism that I'm searching for. It is the authentic subject, which the artist is now able to understand through the cognitive capacity and seems to be related to what Thomas Aquinas calls "intellectus."

Drawing a subject through intellectus is to draw with an eye to essence, with a sensibility for how the person being drawn is at once a part of something larger (the image of God) and, at the same time, an irreducible, individual inflection of that essence. Because human beings are individuated, their appearances through intellectus vary from person to person. Moreover, my own perception is conditioned by my own human imperfections, and can thus err. The point is not to get a perfect portrait, but to participate in the reflection of the image of God by knowing and portraying that person through portrait paintings and drawings.

Freedom, Identity, and Narrative in Muriel Spark's *The Comforters*

Harrison Otis, Baylor University

One reason that literary narrative might conduce to greater human understanding is suggested by Alasdair MacIntyre's famous contention that "[t]he unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest" (219). If human lives have an inescapably narrative shape, then we can only understand human lives in narrative terms. Thus, Charles Taylor goes so far as to say that "it is through the power of making and understanding stories that I have access to myself as a self" (318).

Muriel Spark's 1957 novel *The Comforters*, however, dramatizes what happens when an overdetermined sense of narrative limits threatens to destroy, rather than to develop, one's understanding of oneself and the world. One of the main characters in the novel, Caroline Rose, suddenly becomes able to hear disembodied voices narrating her life, a narration that coincides exactly with the novel that we are reading. The experience raises troubling questions about the relationship between narrative and agency: does Caroline's imprisonment within narrative, so to speak, make her less than a full human agent, a mere pawn of her story? I argue, to the contrary, that Spark's novel encourages its readers to use the narrative limits that surround them as spurs to exercise their freedom. The narrating voices that Caroline hears seem initially to be negative forces; the novel's title, in fact, likens them to "the Comforters in Job" (Spark *Curriculum* 203). The ordeal causes Caroline to feel helpless, as though she were going mad or subject to an overmastering predestination. Nonetheless, the pain that these pseudo-comforters causes stings Caroline into the real exercise of her own agency: Caroline is able to alter the plot of the novel, and ends the story by writing a novel of her own, using notes from the narratorial voices. Paradoxically, then, Caroline becomes more free by virtue of knowing the plot of which she is a part.

The Comforters therefore demonstrates how one's narrative identity is neither a hubristic exercise of self-creation nor a self-imposed determinism but rather a productive exercise of personal agency in dialogue with the external forces of contingency and (potentially) divine Providence. As a result, I argue, Spark's novel reveals how even the limits of narrative form give insight into what it means to live as a free human self in a contingent world.

Works Cited

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 3rd ed., U of Notre Dame P, 2007.

Spark, Muriel. *The Comforters*. New Directions, 1994.

—. *Curriculum Vitae*. Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

Taylor, Charles. *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity*. Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2016.

Multiverses and Robin Hood(s): A Theological Analysis of Narrative Multiplicity

Kaylie Page, Duke University

As J. R. R. Tolkien argues in his essay “On Fairy Stories,” stories are formed when the tellers reach into the ancient “Cauldron of Story” and withdraw old tropes and characters to combine in new ways. Narrative has always relied on such repetition and re-mixing, but some stories are mixed from the Cauldron in even more specific combinations: not content with giving new names and characteristics to archetypes, storytellers have for many years been retelling the stories of already-established characters and worlds.

Characters such as Robin Hood, King Arthur, or Cinderella exist in any number of iterations: their companions, their motivations, and the specifics of their stories change constantly as their tellers and hearers change. In recent years, popular film franchises have brought this sort of narrative multiplicity into the public eye in a new way: the Star Wars franchise replaced the plotlines of the older Extended Universe of novels and comics with the recent Sequel Trilogy, the Marvel Cinematic Universe has introduced the “multiverse” and begun making films and shows that feature the same characters in an assortment of universes, and the DC Comics films and shows leave it ambiguous which versions of their characters are narratively siloed and which can enter each others’ stories via the multiverse. In these examples, a drive for multiplicity meets a desire for unity, with disparate results: all of Marvel’s Spidermen can interact in the same story-world despite their separate plotlines, where one set of Star Wars stories has been declared uncanonical in favor of another set. And before stories could be corporately owned, there was no such thing as the “canonical” version of King Arthur; there was only the version that a certain author or hearer liked best.

In this paper, I want to explore the theological implications of this pattern in human storytelling. Humans, or at least some humans, have a desire for the specific sort of multiplicity that retells the stories of well-known characters in new ways, and I argue that this desire speaks to a particular facet of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Narrative multiplicity reflects at once the multiplicity and the unity of the one Church made up of disparate individuals. The lives of the saints militant and triumphant layer onto each other and onto the life of Christ, such that in each particular Christian’s story, the character of the one Christ shines through in a unique way as each Christian individually, and the whole Church together, is formed into the Bride of Christ. As these narratives of multiplicity shine light onto the multiplicity of the Church, this basis in theological truth also allows us to analyze what types of narrative multiplicity reveal Christian truth best, and what sorts of reiterated narratives might diminish our ability to see how the one Christ works in the created world.

A Liturgy of Hope in a Time of Evil: Olivier Messiaen and the Quartet for the End of Time

Thomas Pearson, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

“I was born a believer.” This familiar statement from twentieth-century French composer Olivier Messiaen is a testament both to his deep Roman Catholic faith and to the way in which that faith shapes and informs so much of his remarkable music. Perhaps the most famous example of this quality as embodied in Messiaen’s music surrounds the circumstances of the composition and first performance of his Quartet *For the End of Time* for Clarinet, Violin, Cello and Piano. Messiaen wrote the long and spiritually profound work, comprising eight musically diverse sections, while a prisoner of war in a Nazi detention camp, Stalag VIII A, in Görlitz, Silesia. Under oppressive and grueling conditions, Messiaen completed the work in little more than six months, and formally performed it in the detention camp with three other musician-prisoners on January 15, 1941. It was “an event that would eventually be regarded as one of the great premieres of the twentieth century.”

The work takes its inspiration from the New Testament, from the Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle, Chapter 10: “And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. . . And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.” Messiaen was strongly attracted to the language and the imagery of the Apocalypse of St. John, and was repeatedly struck by the phrase “there should be time no longer” as particularly relevant to the conditions in the detention camp under which he and thousands of other prisoners of war suffered. He was convinced that this was a message of hope that should be conveyed to the inmates there. Messiaen, born a believer, meant to compose a work that would be a liturgy of Christian hope, reminding all those who surrounded him at Stalag VIII A of the promise that “there should be time no longer,” the promise that the mundane boundaries of their current existence were being transcended by a transformative divine eternity.

Relying on a model of describing ancient Christian liturgies as ritual celebrations for proclaiming hope in the midst of evil, as developed by philosopher Terence Cuneo, this paper will seek to frame a proposal that Messiaen’s Quartet *For the End of Time* is just such a work of liturgical art that declares God’s promise that “there shall be time no longer.”

Using the Book of Wisdom (and the *Silmarillion*) to Spot the Fairly Ubiquitous But Often Ignored Danger of Literal Idolatry

Lewis Pearson, Associate Professor, University of Saint Francis

Idolatry is a sin to which many admit being susceptible figuratively, in the sense of prioritizing some pursuit or desire above God. Wealth is considered an idol when pursued in a disordered fashion, as is victory, prestige, sensual gratification, and so on. At the same time, literal idolatry, worshipping a manmade artifact as if it were God, isn't something that many people think is a problem for them personally, or perhaps even for anyone else. Indeed, the word "idolatry" seems to have become a byword for displacing God with anything (wealth, sensual gratification, etc.) EXCEPT explicit artifact worship. The Bible is full of warnings against avarice, envy, vainglory, lust, et cetera. The Bible is also full of admonitions against idolatry. When one reads those admonitions, rarely are they about figuratively displacing God with some created thing. They are overwhelmingly about literal worship of crafted images and the handiwork of men. Then why are so many today so quick to think of something other than literal idolatry when that word is mentioned?

Maybe the action of idolatry when literally defined appears so clearly ludicrous, it doesn't occur to many to think of it as a danger. After all, these days does anyone do such a thing? Is it even possible for anyone to be so ignorant or perverse or just plain odd to be tempted to literal idolatry? The obvious answer to these questions seems to be "no," but in this presentation I will argue that the actual answer is "yes," and further that literal idolatry is especially spiritually dangerous in an age when it has all but disappeared from the thoughts and concerns of many Christians.

I will first establish the primary and inherent goodness of image-making and of handiworks. The explanation of the wickedness of the idolatrous turn will then be fairly straightforward, as it departs from the source, function, and telos of appropriate image-making and handiworks. I will then illustrate how easily it is for one to slip unexpectedly into idolatry.

Much of this work will be accomplished through an exegesis of selections from the Book of Wisdom, largely drawn from chapters ten through seventeen. These chapters provide a series of specific scenarios that depict how idolatry can creep into the life of a person or a people. The scenarios are written with profound psychological insight and sympathy. That sympathy notwithstanding, the chapters conclude with an analysis that makes clear what should be the obviousness of the folly of idolatry. Further illustration and expansion will be provided through the use of some passages from Tolkien's *Silmarillion*.

Ars grammatica quaerens intellectum?

Megan Perry, Yale Medieval Studies

In tenth-century England, heyday of the Benedictine Reform, Ælfric of Eynsham's *Grammar* suggested that the *ars grammatica* was to be ordered toward the acquisition of wisdom. The first treatise that coined vernacular metalinguistic terms for Latin grammar was envisioned as being at the service of *wisdom*. *Wisdom* in Old English is, of course, not entirely coterminous with wisdom in the modern sense; neither was its use here a gloss of a Latin term. What, then, did Ælfric mean when he proposed that study of *stæfcræfte* (Latin grammar) lent itself to *wisdom*?

The relevance of a discussion of Ælfric's *Grammar* to this symposium, themed around 'art seeking understanding' rests on two key questions, both of which I am minded to ask. First, was grammar a productive art in the early Middle Ages? If so, in what way? Following in a limited way Martin Irvine's work on *Grammatica* as the 'making of textual culture', I will contend with the possibility that for the early Middle Ages, *grammatica* was a dominant art, and this not merely in a titular way. Latin composition was the first art the child learned in the context of a monastic school, and undergirded all further studies in literature or exegesis.

Second, to what extent was the OE *wisdom* coterminous with *intellectum*, understanding? Here, I will explore Ælfric's sense of grammar's purpose. Setting aside what it was, what did Ælfric think it was for? Wisdom, but what did he mean by this, and how exactly did training in the *ars grammatica* imbue a student with it? To complicate this, tenth-century monastics in the circle of Dunstan and Æthelwold were the power players of learned culture, and by Ælfric's tenure as abbot of Eynsham, such monastics, all formed in the art of Latin grammar, had monopolized the English episcopacy. Following Rebecca Stephenson's work on Latin in monastic identity at the turn of the millennium, I will consider how Ælfric's vision of grammar forming *wisdom* extended beyond the individual Latin student to the culture at large.

The paper proposed, should it be accepted, will invite into the symposium's conversation a prolific homilist, hagiographer, and exegete, a self-styled monastic reformer, and, indeed, a grammarian, to discuss how he saw the relationship between this liberal art, the least-loved member of the traditional trivium, and understanding.

Educating Grief: Toward a Poetic Knowledge of Death and Suffering in the Integrated Humanities Classroom

Brooke Ramsey, Valor Preparatory School

Despite the recent renewal of integrated humanities programs proposing virtue formation as the highest aim of any encounter with the literary and fine arts, an education in grief as the proper response to death and human suffering has been sorely neglected. The Ancients defined virtue as right feeling which guides right action. To that end, Aristotle wrote *Poetics* to guide the playwright in the true purpose of tragedy-to bring about a public catharsis of pity and terror in response to the hero's sudden reversal of fate-but how many humanities teachers today prepare for tears in the classroom?

In contrast to our post-Enlightenment scientific, analytical approach to knowledge, education in the poetic mode requires a cultivation of the senses, emotions, and imagination. Through story, poetry, and experience, it seeks to place students in the kind of direct, piercing contact with reality, whether delightful or terrible, which leads to human communion, personal transformation, and the creation of new art.

Dicken's *Hard Times* Professor Thomas Gradgrind famously dismissed Sissy Jupe's direct knowledge of horses on her family farm as insufficient compared to another student's fact-focused definition. Instead of horses, what if the subject of inquiry was a human corpse or an experience of profound suffering?

Educators must develop their craft in such a way as to allow the literary and fine arts do what they do best-teach students how to feel rightly, even if the encounter entails a sudden dramatic outburst.

In my proposed presentation, I will review the history and purpose of poetic knowledge and catharsis in virtue formation. I will also draw on the Spanish philosopher Unamuno to propose a much-needed broader understanding of the tragic sense of life for students to develop the deep compassion needed for a relational life of mercy. To accomplish this, I will outline several possible approaches to educating grief in the humanities classroom: 1) artistic liturgies of lamentation; 2) the performance of tragedy; and 3) embodied experiences with death and suffering.

To conclude, I plan to offer insight from the Dostoyevsky, Flannery O'Connor, and other writers in the tradition to illustrate how a poetic vision of death and suffering is often the muse and catalyst for the creation of new art which moves the human soul to right feeling and action.

The Problem of Pain According to Flannery O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away* and Albert Camus's *La Peste*

Avery Rist, Indiana University

"Listen, boy. Even the mercy of the Lord burns."

~Flannery O'Connor, *The Violent Bear It Away*

The doctor of a little boy watches him die in excruciating pain. A father learns his little boy, developmentally disabled, has been murdered. Focusing on Dr Rieux and Rayber's reactions to suffering, this paper seeks to analyze the ways Albert Camus and Flannery O'Connor express and wrestle with theodicy in their works *La Peste* and *The Violent Bear It Away*. I chose to put these works together predominantly because the elements of existentialism evident in Rayber that O'Connor plays with and critiques, is thematically similar to that of Camus's project in *La Peste*, which is most articulated in the character of Dr Rieux.

Despite having a death toll that almost made me nauseous, in *La Peste*, young Jacques Othon's death scene has the most brutal descriptions in the whole book. Taking the form of a "ludicrous crucifixion" (195) in his deathbed, he is surrounded in the hospital by people who "had never seen so directly, so long drawn out, the death throes of an innocent" (195). When the boy finally dies, Dr Rieux, who had been with the child the entire time, snaps, "That one, at least, was innocent, you can be sure of that!" (198). He then escapes outside and recovers himself in the sunshine.

But when Rayber realizes his own son had been killed, he "stood waiting for the raging pain, the intolerable hurt that was his due, to begin, so that he could ignore it, but he continued to feel nothing. He stood light-headed at the window and it was not until he realized there would be no pain that he collapsed" (456). Rayber is left with a numbness more empty than Dr Rieux's.

Rayber and Dr Rieux react to the children's sufferings in some ways that are similar but also reveal the culmination of their worldview, and also their author's different value judgments on said worldview. This paper, comparing and contrasting how the character's responses relate to theodicy, connects to the theme of the symposium by exploring how the art of the literature of Flannery O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away* and Albert Camus's *La Peste* seek to understand issues of suffering.

Using Literary and Philosophical Artistic Texts to Understand Post-pandemic Teaching Challenges.

Anne-Marie Schultz, Baylor University

Caitlin Maples, Baylor University

In this paper, we describe how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our pedagogical practices. . Classroom spaces quickly became virtual, with synchronous and asynchronous learning and lesson plans. Then we confronted challenges associated with learning loss and ongoing fear of the virus as we returned to masked and then unmasked Face to Face teaching. These rapid changes require ongoing adaptation of classroom spaces and pedagogical practices. We must adapt as the virus mutates, recedes and returns. Adaptations are all the more challenging because of the tumultuous social and political events in America and across the world. In America, decisions about masking, vaccines, and social distancing are all highly politicized. There is an overall mistrust of the role of government in our lives. Reproductive rights of settled precedent are being undermined. Books are being banned. The economy is in seeming freefall. The wars and refugee crises in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa do little to help with any kind of normalcy in the classroom. However, as bleak as the world seems right now, we are not in this alone. In fact, there is already a body of contemporary literature that explores pandemic teaching. (Footnote contemporary things) However there are also many resources from philosophical and literary traditions of the past that can help us navigate our role as teachers and learners in these troubled times. In the first section of the paper, X, a graduate student at University Y shares her perspective as a young teacher/scholar getting ready to embark on a career. She explores how the pandemic disrupted her classroom experience, shaped that her choice of dissertation topic, and shifted her career goals. In the second section, Z a full philosophy professor with almost thirty years of teaching experience at University Y, explains the challenges that she, as a senior faculty member, has faced in adapting to the new learning modalities necessitated by the pandemic. In section IV, we draw upon the aesthetic aspects of Plato's dialogues, C.S. Lewis's essay, "Learning in Wartime," and Tolkein's Lord of the Rings to bring to light important social and psychological dimensions of pandemic pedagogy that may help educators navigate these tumultuous times as they

Subversive Literature and the Christian Imagination

Thomas Sieberhagen, KU Leuven

Answering the prompt: How do different modes of art contribute to the development of faith? What is the role of literary art in developing the imagination?

I believe Charles Taylor is correct in abandoning the term “worldview” and adopting instead the term “social imaginary” to describe how we live and move in the world. The term “worldview” overemphasizes head-knowledge, and therefore its solutions are didactic. However, “A social imaginary is not how we *think* about the world, but how we *imagine* the world before we ever think about it; hence the social imaginary is made up of the stuff that funds the imagination—stories, myths, pictures, narratives” (James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 66). Within this paradigm, the question behind the development of Christian faith is not “How can we distribute information about Christ?” but rather, “How can we fuel the Christian imagination with the truth and beauty of Christ?” In answer to this question, I will argue in this paper that subversive aesthetics have the most potential to capture the imaginations of Christians today. As proof, I intend to offer three examples of subversive literature, each from different moments in Christian history, and each demonstrating the power of subversive literature: the parables of Jesus, *The Praise of Folly* by Desiderius Erasmus, and *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis.

Though the parables can sound dreary to life-long Christians, Jesus scholars agree that they were highly subversive in their historical context. In the first section, I will argue that it is the subversive nature of the parables that holds the secret to their impact and longevity in the Christian imagination. I will use the research of John Dominic Crossan, N. T. Wright, and Tom Thatcher to illustrate the subversive nature of two of the most well-known parables: the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. Second, Erasmus’ famous satire, *The Praise of Folly*, was a best-seller in its day, with forty editions in Erasmus’ lifetime, finding popularity among Protestants and Catholics. Scholars such as J. C. Olin and John Huizinga will help me to place the book in its historical context and explore why *The Praise of Folly* has been capturing imaginations for 500 years. Finally, *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis provides us with a modern example of subversive literature. Its popularity and its enduring impact on the Christian imagination are indisputable. Again, I propose that it is the subversive mode of the work that led to its impact. Lewis himself seems to know intuitively the power of art to influence the Christian imagination. Indeed, in *Screwtape*, he often contrasts Satan’s “asceticism to the aestheticism of God” (Larry Harwood, “Lewis’ *Screwtape Letters*”, 1). This dynamic will be explored in this section.

My conclusion will contain three characteristics of subversive literature, three characteristics that my examples all exhibit: 1. Subversive literature is offensive to someone. 2. Subversive literature presents an upside-down world. 3. Subversive literature sticks in the imagination. These characteristics allow us to better imagine the place of subversive literature in the development of Christian faith today.

Understanding Through Analogy: Christina Rossetti's Tractarian Imagination

Ryan Sinni, Baylor University

Christina Rossetti's art seeks understanding through the doctrine of analogy. Although the term "analogy" has been defined in various ways throughout Christian history, the form of the doctrine that is most relevant to Rossetti's work appears in the writings of her Tractarian contemporary John Keble. In Keble's formulation, analogy is the doctrine that visible things signify spiritual realities, not by mere coincidence but by divine intention. This doctrine provides theological grounds for Rossetti's efforts to understand nature and human experience in her devotional prose and her poetry. In her prose work *Called to be Saints*, Rossetti links each of the Twelve Apostles with a flower and a precious stone, offering a reflection on the spiritual significance of each of these material objects. In *Seek and Find*, her prose study of the Benedicite (also known as the Song of Creation), Rossetti offers two brief meditations on each creature that appears in this song: one on the creature's significance in the order of creation and another on its significance in redemption. Three of Rossetti's volumes of poetry follow a structure similar to that of *Seek and Find*, being divided into a non-devotional and a devotional section. In these volumes, Rossetti embodies the doctrine of analogy by revisiting apparently secular images and themes from the non-devotional section from a religious angle in the devotional section. Examining Rossetti's use of analogy reveals some ways in which art can foster truth, goodness, and beauty. With respect to truth, it shows how contemplating the visible world through art can lead to spiritual insight. With respect to goodness, it demonstrates that viewing art can contribute to moral formation, since it can cultivate the habit of viewing the world analogically (i.e., biblically). With respect to beauty, it reveals that Christians can understand their experiences of beauty in art as pointers to the beauty of God.

Barriers to Beauty: An Engineer Encounters the Arts

Collin Smith, University of Minnesota

As an engineer, my training in the STEM fields did not prepare me to meaningfully engage with the humanities. Indeed, the inability to communicate across the cultural gap dividing these two fields is pervasive. Most people cannot imagine how the liberal arts could exist on a continuum with the art of engineering. Common experience seems to validate this attitude: in appreciating art, we should grasp something of our humanity; the STEM fields seem to strip us of our humanity. Poetry can shape us as people; circuit boards seem to hold no such edifying potential. However, I believe these barriers can be overcome, leading not only to improved communication between the two fields but a reintegration of the STEM fields and the liberal arts generally.

In my paper, I will examine the barriers that prevented me as an engineer from engaging in the liberal arts. I propose to detail how an appreciation of the fine arts and the contemplation of beauty aided my progression towards more embodied modes of thought. In this examination, I will analyze some faulty assumptions made by those in the STEM fields and the humanities when speaking to their cultural counterpoints that prevent meaningful communication. I will also suggest how those in the humanities can more successfully engage with those in the STEM fields and *vice versa*.

After addressing the communication gap between the STEM fields and the humanities, I will also address the difficulty of categorically reintegrating the two fields. I propose to show that the liberal arts and engineering share a profound, fundamental connection through the genus of art. Far from being dehumanizing, I propose to show that engineering actually serves to rehumanize scientific knowledge. Additionally, since engineering produces artifacts meant to be used, engineering as a participatory art has the potential to shape humanity in ways that the modern fine arts cannot. Finally, I will show that viewing engineering as art is essential to reconstituting a mutual interdependence between engineering and the humanities.

By sharing my journey, as an engineer and scientist, of coming to appreciate the arts and the humanities, my paper will explore (1) what the barriers prevent a fuller appreciation of the arts by those in STEM fields, (2) suggest ways that artists can better communicate to those in the STEM fields and *vice versa*, and (3) suggest a fundamental connection between the liberal arts and engineering, which will serve as a foundation to heal the cultural divorce between these fields.

Pig Pen & the Christ: The Spiritually Formative Impact of Identity Portraiture

Christine Lee Smith, California Baptist University

In the world of Western contemporary art photographic portraiture is uniquely transfixing. While contemporary art requires viewers to maintain an openness to understand an artwork, photographic portraiture of a particular style capitalizes on this posture of responsiveness from the viewer and transforms it into an invitation to consider questions these portraits often evoke around life, inhabiting a body, spiritual interiority, the complexity of relationships, even death. This kind of photographic portrait — elsewhere defined as Identity Portraiture — is able to bypass the natural barriers many people carry into looking at contemporary art through the confrontation the viewer has with the gaze of the sitter in this style of portraiture. With unmediated space between them, photographic Identity Portraiture is thus empowered to contribute significantly to believers' spiritual sensitivity as it navigates the deep interiority of the viewer where the work of the Holy Spirit occurs.

The work of photographer Catherine Opie provides an excellent case study for understanding how photographic portraiture can form believers spiritually, specifically her work, "Pig Pen (Tattoos)," 2009. Opie's early portraits are known, in part, for their transgressive nature. She aimed to create visibility for LGBTQ+ people when there was little (and much of that was based on harmful stereotypes). Opie at times exploited this stereotyping, as in her series *Being and Having* (1991). However, as she continued working in formal portraiture she began photographing her subjects less performatively. While not all responses to these portraits are positive, the impact of them continues today, making them feel both timeless and unequivocally human. In "Pig Pen (Tattoos)," 2009 Opie offers a space for Pig Pen to share their humanity through the vulnerability of their gaze, posture, and nakedness. The result is a portrait of Pig Pen that invites viewers to consider their own experiences, questions, and assumptions around inhabiting a body today. Next, parallels between "Pig Pen (Tattoos)," 2009 and the story of Doubting Thomas, found in John 20, are explored as an example of how contemporary photographic portraiture spiritually directs believers into deeper spiritual sensitivity — particularly empathy. As in traditional Christian spiritual direction, the questions that emerge from a direction session are brought about by the Holy Spirit and intended to help the directee discern through their life's context, and Scripture, the invitation of God hiding in plain sight. Contemporary photographic Identity Portraits offer something similar: these artworks evoke the kinds of questions that help attuned viewers discover God's invitation to them through the gaze of the 'other,' particularly when considered alongside sacred texts.

This paper demonstrates the spiritually formative capacities of contemporary photographic Identity Portraiture, and how it can function as a kind of spiritual director to viewers through the work of the Holy Spirit. Limits to this potential in contemporary artworks are also considered (1 Cor. 6:12). Contemporary Identity Portraiture, as explored through "Pig Pen (Tattoos)," 2009 and the story of Doubting Thomas, model how current artworks can act as a tool of the Holy Spirit to shape and contribute significantly to believers' spiritual formation.

1. Identity Portraits are defined as those possessing a biographical (rather than fictional) context, a non-performative posture, and a gaze towards the viewer. See, Christine Lee Smith, "Identity Portraiture: Cultivating Empathetic Viewing," MFA Thesis (Azusa Pacific University, 2020).
2. Used in Berger's definitions of naked versus nude. See, John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1972).

Useless Art?: Social Practice and the Pursuit of Justice

Alex Sosler, Montreat College

In the modern understanding, art exists should exist for its own sake. If art serves a political, religious or moral end, then the artistic worth is diminished. However, this presentation challenges that modern assumption. Particularly in minority communities, it is imperative to understand the suffering that shapes art.

By providing a brief history of socially engaged art in the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King, Jr., this presentation will argue for the goods of art as social practice. I will use the examples of Steve Prince and portraits by Sedrick Huckaby to provide a brief theology of art as social practice and suggest some renewal efforts for Christians to consider.

Aesthetic Formation: Art for Holistic Spiritual Formation

Alex Sosler, Montreat College

Makoto Fujimura suggests that artists serve as “border stalkers”: on the edge of both artistic culture as Christians but also on the periphery of churches as artists. Creatives can feel rejected by both but also have the privilege to see into and connect both cultures if they are equipped and prepared. In this presentation, I will bring artists from the border to the center to see how an artistic imaginative can serve the whole church.

Because we are made in the image of God, the transcendent one, we need formation in every Transcendental for the holistic formation of our souls. While the “truth” (theology) and “goodness” (discipleship) transcendentals are readily available in Christian formation, beauty often gets left behind as too subjective or emotional. But beauty shapes us. Or as Marilynne Robinson has written, “beauty disciplines.” Ranging from the influences of Flannery O’Connor, Simone Weil, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Roger Scruton, this paper will argue that artists can help us regard our habit of being in the world, the training of attention, contemplating that which cannot be attained, and how the grotesque reveals. As such, artists can help the church see and attend to the world in a more holistic and faithful way.

Arrival as a Sensorial Metaphor for the Processing of Trauma: An Incarnational Model of Human Flourishing

Chelle Stearns, The Seattle School of Theology & Psychology

The 2016 movie *Arrival* takes its viewers into the felt experience of trauma. Director Denis Villeneuve allows a slow unfolding of time, story, and soundscape to guide the viewer into a “bottom up” experience “by allowing the body to have experiences that viscerally contradict the helplessness, rage, or collapse that result from trauma” (van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 3). Crucial to the feel of the movie is the disruption of linear time. Villeneuve begins by utilizing a palindromic structure for the entire movie, signaling this with Max Richter’s palindromic piece, “The Nature of Daylight.” Villeneuve immerses the viewer into the feel of disordered reality. Shelly Rambo’s trauma informed theology helps to make sense of this. Through “time, body, word” reality and experience can become disordered and/or elided. In this model, there is nowhere in our lives where death does not impact us but the witness of “the weary trickle of love” who is the Spirit ensures that love remains (Rambo, *Spirit & Trauma*).

The music of Icelandic composer Jóhann Jóhannsson also viscerally demonstrates the phenomenon of how the main character’s mind is slowly restructured by the alien language. Jóhannsson utilizes the worldless human voice throughout to move back and forth between the familiar comfort of human voices to the uncanny distortion of the voice through the techniques of looping and overdubbing. Much like in the aftermath of trauma, Jóhannsson’s music sounds out how the familiar can become unfamiliar when the relationship of mind and body to the rest of the world is disrupted by a traumatic event. This taps into the primacy of the language of music to how humans make sense of the world and of reality (McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*). Jóhannsson’s music embodies the feeling of how trauma can dislodge meaning and bodily sense for a person, and then reintegrate the inexplicable into new ways of comprehension and being. This demonstrates well what trauma theorist Bessel van der Kolk argues, “people can never get better without knowing what they know and feeling what they feel” (van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 27).

The musical and visual storytelling of *Arrival* demonstrates human flourishing through the embracing of vulnerability. We also see mirrored in this the power-in-vulnerability (Coakley) found in the Incarnation and articulated in the Christic hymn of Philippians 2. In this creedal song, the enfleshed Jesus takes on all human experience and trauma and becomes one who is betrayed and crushed by those he came to love. Yet in his solidarity with humanity, he is not overcome but is able to raise up all of humanity as he is raised from death into life. Thus, *Arrival* not only provides a model and metaphor for healing from traumatic experience but also shows how this vulnerability brings Christians into a Christological pattern of life and redemption, as we are enabled through the Spirit to participate in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Can Beauty Lead to Understanding in Contemporary Physics?

Mitch Stokes, New Saint Andrews College

On the frontline of physics, there is a heated debate about whether beauty is a reliable indicator of truth, particularly as it becomes increasingly difficult to reconcile important features of quantum mechanics and general relativity, exhibited especially by the recent “string theory wars.” A number of prominent physicists have argued that this “stagnation” in physics may be due to physicists’ reliance on aesthetic and other (possibly related) nonempirical criteria for developing new theories. And despite the traditional acceptance of beauty as a guide in physics, this is a reasonable concern: after all, it seems unlikely that our judgments of beauty (themselves possibly subjective) would be dependable guides to the subatomic realm which is far removed from the macroscopic physical factors that would have been relevant to natural selection and human evolution. As theoretical physicist Leonard Susskind puts it in a recent lecture, “It’s a strange and interesting fact that evolution produced an animal one or two steps above the monkeys...[which can] get to quantum mechanics,...get to gravity, [and] get to the standard model of elementary particles, and so forth.” Of course, a related issue is that the use beauty as a guide in theoretical physics, particularly its use through the application of mathematics, seems to make the universe look, as philosopher Mark Steiner put it, “user-friendly,” as if the universe were in some sense “anthropocentric.”

In this paper, I will describe some of the most salient examples of how beauty has been a reliable guide to truth in contemporary physics, particularly in particle physics. I will also explain why, despite tremendous past successes, some highly respected physics are concerned that this reliance on beauty is now leading physics astray, perhaps even undermining the scientific method. I then look at how other physicists respond to such complaints. I also discuss that, despite the importance of this debate to physics, the definition of beauty is not often clearly specified, though some specific characteristics can be identified. I close with some considerations that this topic has for natural theology.

The World as Art and Sign: Lucy Hutchinson's Order and Disorder

Matthew Turnbull, Baylor University

In answer to one of the symposium's central questions, Can art contribute to moral and spiritual perception?, Lucy Hutchinson (1620-1681) frames her biblical epic, *Order and Disorder*, upon the notion that the world itself is the art of God. As Hutchinson presumes, since God created the world under no compulsion, out of nothing, then the world itself should be understood as an artifact of God's free, creative genius. In this view, not only did grass not have to exist, it certainly did not need to be green. That it is green then serves as a sign to indicate to the spiritually perceptive something about God's nature. Thus, seeing the art that is our world as a sign of God's power and nature rewards as well as promotes spiritual perception. According to Hutchinson, seeing the world rightly leads to knowledge of God.

We can appreciate this natural theologizing better when we recognize that when the perceptive observer of the natural world derives meaning about the nature of God from the world, he or she is making inference by way of signs. I examine two passages in *Order and Disorder* which employ natural theology as a way to a) detail how natural theology works, and b) to show that Augustine's theory of signs (semiotics) informs and undergirds natural theology. Ultimately, I argue that a semiotic understanding is essential to the process of natural theologizing and is also helpful in more deeply appreciating the way Hutchinson's poem works, a poem that seeks to elicit spiritual perception in the reader.

Can art provide hope? The allure and limits of enlightenment, ecstasy, and expectation

Wesley Vander Lugt, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

This paper explores the possibility for art to provide hope through examples from artists Ta-Nehisi Coates, Pharrell Williams, Victory Boyd, and others. The basic argument is that while Christians can affirm aspects of enlightening and ecstatic art, the best companion for fostering hope is art that expresses honest expectation.

Many artists today argue that art should not aim to provide hope. Ta-Nehisi Coates, for example, thinks art should enlighten rather than offer specious hope, as exemplified in *Between the World and Me*. This kind of art helps us come to terms with and survive in the world as it is rather than give fairy-tale hope of another world. At the same time, part of the allure of enlightening art is the possibility of understanding this world and the hope of finding resilience within it. What is the place of this kind of art within a Christian imaginary? Rather than being opposed to hope as Coates suggests, what if enlightening art, much like the art of Ecclesiastes, acts as a precursor for hope by prying our eyes wide open and cultivating discontent?

For others, art can provide ecstatic experiences that create distance from the harshness of reality, assuring us that the sun is shining and will continue to shine. For instance, Pharrell William's record-breaking song "Happy" coaxes the listener to affirm that "happiness is the truth" and "can't nothing bring me down." Like a Thomas Kinkade painting flooded in light, this kind of art can be a balm for world-weary souls. Is this type of art sentimental and dishonest, however, ignoring the brokenness of the world, or is it joyful resistance in the face of pain and oppression? Can Christians affirm these artistic expressions as companions of hope or does this ecstatic aesthetic too easily become a dangerous anesthetic numbing us to the world's problems?

Between art of this-worldly enlightenment and other-worldly ecstasy lies art that imparts hope in the form of honest expectation. Victory Boyd is a fitting example of this approach, whose album *The Broken Instrument* grapples with the experience of being "lost in a crazy place, home to where all the reject lives" while unable to shake the fact that she has "heard legends." Her art bears witness to a cracked world still capable of glory, a broken life still capable of beauty and unshakable joy. Her songs contain elements of enlightenment and ecstasy while synthesizing them within a legendary imagination that reinterprets the present. To receive the benefit of this art, of course, one needs to entertain legends and the possibility that fairy tales are aids for faith seeking hopeful understanding and expression.

Death and the Maiden: Understanding Our Need for Revenge and Promoting Forgiveness

Brian Warren, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

When choosing a play to direct for an upcoming season for the university theatre program, a careful analysis of the pertinence and gravity of the theme of a given play is always crucial to the process. Our production of *Death and the Maiden* (by Ariel Dorfman) in 2018 stands out to me as a memorable example of thematic “weight” due to its exploration of certainly one of the most heinous problems that plague mankind: revenge and its consequences. Christianity teaches us to forgive the transgressor. As we know from art forms and even from real-life events, that is so very difficult to do.

The older among might remember the 1994 film version of this fascinating play *Death and the Maiden*, starring Sigourney Weaver and Ben Kingsley.

In brief, the character “Paulina Escobar” is a political activist whose husband is a prominent lawyer in an unnamed South American country that has recently emerged from the dark days of a fascist dictatorship. One day, Paulina’s husband “Gerardo” receives a ride home with a neighbor. That chance encounter brings up horrific demons from her past, as she is convinced that the person who has given her husband a ride (named Dr. Miranda) was part of the old fascist regime that tortured and raped her, while she was blindfolded.

In addition to the intrigue and suspense of the play, my decision to direct this play for our 2018 season came about because of the relevant questions the play asked, such as, why is it sometimes so difficult for abuse victims to be believed? We know how perpetrators can be made to be held accountable — how can victims be made to be more consistently understand the circumstances of the abuse? How can a play like this help us to understand how to forgive, how to be forgiving, while still accounting for evil in the world?

This paper will therefore use my production of *Death and the Maiden* to discuss the issues of revenge and forgiveness, so relevant to our current society. It will use visual aids such as production stills from the play and brief clips from the film to support points made on these issues.

The Rupture that Heals: Doris Salcedo's Shibboleth

Elissa Yukiko Weichbrodt, Covenant College

In our own contemporary moment of deep political polarization, can art engender understanding across difference?

Fifteen years ago, Colombian artist Doris Salcedo split the concrete floor of Turbine Hall — in London's Tate Modern Museum — wide open. The resulting work, Shibboleth, ran 548 feet along the length of the massive hall. It began as a hairline fracture and opened to about a foot at its widest point. To some, the work seemed violent and even threatening. Yet the vast majority of visitors' responses demonstrated that the installation was doing something else altogether.

This paper explores how a seeming act of destruction can serve as both a model of and an opportunity for healing. I begin by acknowledging other, earlier artworks that used gashes or splits as a representation of cultural divides. Then, I argue that Salcedo's crack functions as an invitation to both acknowledge fault lines and reorient ourselves in order to bridge them. Finally, I connect the wound and the scar of Shibboleth to the Apostle Thomas's investigation of Christ's body after the resurrection and consider the implications for our own antagonized culture today.

Presence and Purpose: Visual Art, Worship, and the Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4-6)

Amy Whisenand Krall, Fresno Pacific University

The second commandment (Exodus 20:4-6) shares features with the first. Both outline the boundaries of respect for and worship of God in connection with God's revelation to humanity. Yet they address different angles of that shared concern. While the first commandment addresses God's nature as the God of Israel, the second addresses the question of right worship of this God. Since the Reformation, Protestants have largely interpreted the second commandment as enjoining purely spiritual worship in opposition to the inclusion of images and visual art in worship. John Calvin goes as far as to say that production of images, even religious ones, insults God. As such, the Protestant tradition has inherited a suspicion of visual art, as evidenced by the continued tendency for stark, bare walls in sanctuaries and other worship spaces. Yet, Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox traditions seem completely at home with images in worship. Have Protestants misunderstood the relationship between the second commandment and the role of visual art in Christian worship?

To answer that question in a manner that Protestants would find convincing, this paper turns to the interpretation of Exodus 20:4-6. By considering the contemporary cultural context in which the second commandment came to the Israelites, I argue that the crux of the second commandment involves the freedom of God to dwell where God will, not the rejection of artistic creativity or visual art in worship. When we consider the ancient Near Eastern context, we find that the second commandment addresses and clarifies where the presence of God resides. The New Testament confirms this interpretation of the second commandment in its claim that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). God has chosen to take human form (Phil 2:6-11) and to be "with us" (Matt 1:23); God resides with humans, not in images or idols. The second commandment thus clarifies God's dwelling place.

Some might argue in response that the second commandment's concern for clarity regarding God's dwelling with humans still restricts the use of visual art in worship. After all, God has chosen to reside with the human; worship should be an act of spiritual devotion rendered by the human to God. However, that interpretation of the second commandment represents an overly individualistic and dislocated reading of the commandment. The Ten Commandments are a covenant between God and humans, and one which has human-to-human implications. They are fundamentally relational and communal. Visual art in worship has the capacity to connect humans by reminding, inspiring, and teaching one another about who God is. Moreover, it has the capacity to beautify a space where relationship (both human-to-human and divine-to-human) can flourish and to form a community where God dwells.

The Groaning Preacher: Water, Wind, and Creature in Christina Rossetti's Poetry

Abigail Wills, Baylor University

Christina Rossetti's poetry is filled with exploration of the natural world. Rossetti's love for more-than-human creation is demonstrated in her depiction of birds rejoicing in their Creator, in flowers that preach, and in the presence of Christ in all created things. However, although Rossetti depicts creation as dependent on God and praising him, she also makes space for the creation that groans. In Rossetti's poetry, creation both rejoices in the coming of the new creation and groans with longing for it. Thus, hope in Rossetti's works is both joyful and agonizing. She uses her poetic art as a means to explore the natural world, to increase in understanding of God's good creation that nevertheless cries out with groans too deep for words. She fills her poetry with the moans of the sea, the pining of the birds, and the longing of earth for its redemption. In this way, like the psalmist, Rossetti allows natural creation to cry out to God, to seek understanding of the cruelty and suffering of more-than-human creation, and to point to greater truths about God's plan for the redemption of the world. Rossetti presents creation as possessing special knowledge of God's mysteries, acknowledging that earthly life is largely incomprehensible to humans, as "half life's seemings are not what they seem" (Christina Rossetti, "Later Life: A Double Sonnet of Sonnets", in *Christina Rossetti: The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 351,12.5). Rather, more-than-human beings hold images of their Creator within them, as Rossetti prays in another poem:

Lord, purge our eyes to see
Within the seed a tree,
Within the glowing egg a bird,
Within the shroud a butterfly:
Till taught by such, we see
Beyond all creatures Thee,
And hearken for Thy tender word,

And hear it, "Fear not: it is I." (Rossetti, "Judge Not According to the Appearance" 1-8)

With these verses, Rossetti suggests that the visible creation hides the invisible Creator. Because of this belief, Rossetti's words point the reader to look closer at creation, to listen more closely for revelations of the Creator, to hear his "tender word." The statement "Fear not: it is I" is reminiscent of Jesus' cry to his disciples as he walked on water through a storm: "It is I; be not afraid." By alluding to this passage, Rossetti provides a clear view of creation: rather than seeing merely the sea, one may see Christ approaching across the water. Thus more-than-human creation serves as a channel through which God may reveal truth. However, Rossetti's language suggests that creation is not merely a channel for God's revelation, but that creation itself knows mysteries of God. Rossetti writes that "Underneath all things that be / Lies an unsolved mystery" (Rossetti, "Maiden May," 308, 66-67), and as for that "Mystery of mysteries: / This creation hears and sees" (71-72). I argue that Rossetti's poetry explores this "unsolved mystery" that is heard and seen by more-than-human creation, and that her approach is a valuable mode of seeking understanding of God's character and work.

"I Don't Get It!" A Psychology of Conceptual Art

Taylor Worley, Wheaton College

One form of contemporary art uses human cognition itself as its creative canvas. That form is conceptual art, and as a creativity strategy it has resourced countless trends in contemporary visual art for some time. Despite its unorthodox approach, the enduring influence of conceptualism suggests that many museum-goers garner some degree of experiential rewards. It seems that conceptualism actually empowers viewers with a greater degree of imaginative agency through self-reflective thinking /with/ art. This paper will outline a psychological account of conceptualism that aims to define what makes conceptual art both uniquely challenging and potentially more rewarding than other art forms.

Works of conceptual art have been labeled “anti-aesthetic” by both scientists and philosophers alike. While we cannot reduce conceptual works to their visual stimuli, the label does not tell the whole story. Conceptual works, in fact, often employ creative uses of what psychologists of art have termed “visual dissonance” as a strategy for enhancing or extending the process of art appreciation. A simplified account of that process would identify at least three phases: confusion, integration, and production (Minissale, 2013). First, viewers experience the initial zone of visual dissonance wherein they encounter a seemingly non-art object within the art-viewing context of other obvious art objects and face a perceptual dilemma. At this point, viewers must determine whether or not they wish to attempt a cognitive reconciliation of the seemingly out-of-place display (Solso, 2003). If they choose to persist with the encounter, the viewer is then progressing into the next phase where they must balance the familiar and the unfamiliar. This stage draws heavily on memory and reasoning. Once the cognitive dissonance has been somewhat resolved, they are able to progress into the zone of reward, wherein the hard work of holding the aesthetic tension of the encounter and working to integrate the experience receives a payoff in the form of imaginative confidence to engage in fresh meaning-making. The viewer has earned the right to collaborate with the artwork on a highly individualized and creative account of the work’s ultimate meaning. The earned playfulness of this final stage is what most artists aim for in the development of conceptual works. Such complicated interactions surely present challenges for empirical study. For this reason, this paper will explore how the relevant insights of psychology of art can be wed to a field-leading neurological framework like the “Vienna Integrated Model of top-down and bottom-up processes in Art Perception” (VIMAP) developed by the Vienna Cognitive Science Hub (Pelowski, et al. 2017). This framework’s attention to checks on schema congruency, self-relevance, and the viewer’s coping ability mean that the VIMAP is well suited for understanding how viewers engage with conceptual art. Harmonizing these accounts will help to rehabilitate the status of conceptualism in empirical aesthetics by discerning how to pursue an integrative science of conceptual art.

Illuminations and Illustrations: Text and Image in the Theological Imagination

Mariah Ziemer, The Thomas MacLaren Charter School

This paper takes a closer look at the nature and scope of the illustrative genre and its unique ability to combine both text and image in one artistic and communicative experience. From illuminated manuscripts, medieval frescos, and woodblock prints to graphic novels, newspaper cartoons, and children's books, a survey of illustrative forms in both historical and contemporary contexts are referenced, ultimately suggesting a more generous and widespread definition of illustration as a powerful storytelling art form. This discussion is then applied to a theological case study, namely, when we imagine and seek to understand Christ in the biblical narrative through visual works that accompany biblical texts and passages in both traditional and contemporary illustrations, within and outside of the church.

The paper is structured in three main parts and seeks to address the following topics and questions:

PART 1: The genre of illustration is defined and compared to other genres within the visual art world.

How can text and image become synchronized to help us better communicate a message or tell a story—better than (or simply different from) what either art form could prompt on its own?

PART 2: Where do we see Christian themes, ideas, and stories being expressed with these illustrative qualities? How did "biblical illustration" come to be in the early and medieval church, and how does its portrayal of the biblical narrative shape one's understanding of the person and historical life of Christ?

PART 3: What "biblical illustrations" do we see today? Are these illustrated messages and stories explicitly displayed in churches, or are they hiding in seemingly unexpected places? How can artists and church ministers and practitioners incorporate illustrative elements into their biblical teaching and discipleship?